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The Bare Facts

by George H. Smith

illustrated by Emsb

It was downright indecent for a girl who was making an honest living as a stripper to be yanked into the future, where no one wore clothes!

DEAR MARGE,
I have no way of knowing for sure if you'll ever get this letter but the Professor says you will, so I'm sending it along. I guess you and the others have been wondering what happened to little old April. Well, to tell you the truth, Marge, for a while there I wasn't very sure myself.

It seems as if a girl never knows what will happen to her from one minute to the next. There I was out on the runway minding my own business and . . . well, maybe I better start at the beginning and tell you all about it.

I guess you remember that night . . . the night I disappeared, I mean. The night lil'

Marge was shocked—none of these people were wearing clothes!



ole April Dawn disappeared right off the runway in front of four hundred of her panting fans. The way I remember, it happened something like this. I'd just finished the bumps and grinds, had almost crawled up the curtain and was down to the old G-string. The boys in bald head row were really whooping it up when *bang*. just like that...it happened. One minute I was there going over big (I'll bet even that old hag, Red Belle, would admit my act was a dilly that night!) and the next I wasn't there at all. I didn't hear anything, and I didn't feel anything, except a slight draft—which a girl in our business can't afford to be susceptible to. And then... there I was...not on the runway as I should have been, but up on a platform with a whole bunch of strange people standing around staring at me.

I took one look and you can't imagine, Marge, how shocked I was. There wasn't a one in the whole bunch that had a stitch of clothes on! You would have thought it was a stripper's convention, except that half of them were men, and they were quite a bit past the point when

they might have been interesting to look at. I blinked at them a couple of times, feeling real embarrassed, you know. I'm not used to seeing other people with no clothes on.

A SKINNY little bald-headed guy that was closest to me started wringing his hands and stepped closer, looking real upset. "Oh dear. . .oh dear," he said. "There must be some mistake."

"There certainly is," said a big, mannish looking woman right behind him. "You've blundered again, Jenkins."

"I'm sorry, Madam President," the little man said nervously.

By this time they're up real close to me and as naked as jaybirds. Being a lady I lower my eyes—especially since neither of them would take any prize for beauty.

"Young lady," the skinny guy said to me, "Young lady, I don't suppose that you are... No, no, you couldn't be. "

"I couldn't be what?" I asked, at the same time wrapping my scarf around me, which is all I have left of my

costume. At least I was modest even if they weren't.

"You couldn't possibly be Winston Churchill, the great 20th Century statesman. No, of course not. The few books we have on the subject say definitely that Churchill was a man and you're" . . . (and here he gave me a look, Marge, that proved to me that wherever—or maybe I should *whenever*—I was, men hadn't forgotten the difference between the sexes that keeps burlesque houses going) . . . "ahem! You are most certainly a woman."

The look I gave him back was something I save for what crawls from under rocks back home. "No," I said with dignity, "I most certainly am not the 20th Century statesman, Winston Churchill. I am the 20th Century strip tease artist, April Dawn."

THE LITTLE fellow looked more worried than ever and the big babe was scowling at him something awful as she said, "I might have known what would happen if we entrusted the Time Re-Inter-grator to a man."

"I'm sorry. I'm very sorry,

President Meade," the skinny guy mumbled, and then he turned to me again. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Dawn. I'm Professor Thomas Jenkins of the Institute of Pre-Destruction Research. We were conducting an important scientific experiment and. . . well . . . something seems to have gone wrong with our time machine."

"Time machine? I don't get it," I said, but there was a cold chill going up my spine that had nothing to do with my unclothed condition.

The Professor cleared his throat and started in again. "Yes, time machine. I'm afraid that some of our position coordinates must have been off, and so we didn't reach into the House of Parliament in ancient London to bring Mr. Churchill to our time."

"Ha!" I snorted, "you sure didn't! Brother, what you reached into was the House of Strip in 'ancient' Brooklyn and brought April Dawn to your time." Then I did a double take on the words I was using. "Yipe!" I yelled, "What do you mean *your time*? What is your time?"

The Professor looked real sorry for me as he said, "You would call this the 25th Century. We call it 525 P. D.... Post Destruction, that is."

"I wanna go home. I wanna go back to Brooklyn," I wailed.

"Here, here! Stop this nonsense!" It was the big gal, and scared me so bad I stopped crying and got mad. "Don't you know that you are in presence of Roberta Meade, President of the United Dakotas of America?"

"This is supposed to mean something?" I snapped. "I want to go home, and I want to go right now. I don't like it here. It looks like a nudist camp to me, and you all ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"This is New Bismarck, the capitol of the United Dakotas," the Professor put in. "And these people are President Meade's Congress."

"I want to go home... I want to go back to the United States."

"Hm...well... I'm afraid, Miss Dawn, that the United Dakotas are all that's left of the United States. All the rest is radioactive, you know."

THIS BROKE me down but good, and I let loose with the tears for real. The Professor tried to comfort me while the Meade woman stood impatient-like behind him, muttering to herself, her double chins jiggling like mad.

"Now what good is this going to do us?" I overheard her say as I calmed down a little. "Bringing this silly little floozie here instead of Churchill."

"Hey, look out who you're calling a floozie, you big fat. " The Professor put his hand over my mouth at this point but I was fighting mad now, and not taking any lip from this gal, President or not. I jerked my head free and went on, "I'll have you know that I've always been a lady and an artist, and that's more than I can say for you, running around without a stitch on at your age."

"Please, please, Miss Dawn. You mustn't talk to the President that way. You could be held in contempt."

"And contempt is just what I hold for her," I said as Jenkins dragged me away. "I want to go home."

"That is impossible. You see,

Miss Dawn, the Time Machine blew three tubes when it brought you here, and we'll have to send to Southern Rhodesia to get replacements."

"And how long will that take?"

"Well, it's a three-year trip by caravan and sailing ship."

"Three years! My God, I can't stay here that long. I've got a date with Mr. Papias tonight."

"It will be six years both ways, Miss Dawn. The caravan has to go through Northern Canada to avoid the radioactivity, and then they catch a ship at Port Nelson on Hudson's Bay. They have to wait for the ice to break, and then..."

I GROAN, "Six years! And me with only a G-String to my name. Well, Professor, I'll have to have some clothes. Get me some."

"Well...but...haven't you noticed that none of us wear clothes?"

"Yeah, I did, and all I can say is shame on all of you!" I told him. "Dignified people your age should have more dignity."

"But you see, Miss Dawn, things have changed. The climate has grown warmer since your time and materials are much, much scarcer and... well, people just don't wear clothes any more."

Marge, this was just too much. I had to sit down. Here I was, dragged against my will, mind you, into the 25th Century to find out they are so immoral they don't wear clothes at all. Now, I ask myself, how am I going to make a living? Six years I'll be stuck here and how can I stay decent and a lady if I can't take my clothes off to earn a decent living? In a place where everyone walks around with nothing on, who will pay money to see me take them off?

I began to cry again. "Professor why have you done this to me? I've always been a good girl and I got an aged mother to support and keep in good whiskey."

"Please, please, Miss Dawn. I assure you that it was an accident."

"Yeah, yeah, I know. You tried to get Winston Churchill and got me instead. Why did

you have to be playing around in time anyway?"

"I assure you, Miss Dawn, that I was not just playing around with time. We of the 25th Century were seeking help. At the Institute of Pre-Destruction Research, it was decided that this greatest of your statesmen might help us solve our problem."

I stopped sniffing long enough to ask, "What problem?"

BY THIS time we were in the Professor's laboratory. "A very serious problem, Miss Dawn. In fact, one that may destroy the human race where even the A-Bomb failed."

"Well, I guess you can wait until you get those new tubes and make another try at picking up Winnie."

"In six years it may be too late, Miss Dawn."

"That bad, huh? Say, professor, just what is this problem anyway?"

Believe it or not Marge, the Professor blushed, and this will kill you. .he blushed the whole way down! Honest! Guess people always do, but with clothes on we just never

notice. But it's sure is funny to see. I giggled, I just couldn't help it, Marge, and the Professor blushed redder than ever.

He began to stammer and stutter and it went something like this, "It's. .it's a rather delicate. .ahem. .matter. Our people. .well. .they seem to have. .the men, that is. . . what I mean is. . well, after the war there were only a few hundred men left. .that is to say, men who were. .ahem. . . capable of. .well, you know. . . men who were at all. . . shall we say. . . virile."

"Oh fine," I said. "This to add to everything else! April Dawn sure must have been born under the unluckiest star that ever was. What a place for a stripper! Now I can't even. . . Never mind. Not that I want to, of course, but it's always nice to know that you have something to fall back on."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, Miss Dawn."

"Skip it, Prof. Go on with what you was tellin' me."

"Well, at first it wasn't too bad. The men who hadn't been

harm'd did their best to carry on the race."

MY SENSE of humor was beginning to come back now, Marge, and I must say I found all this kind of funny. "Well now," I said, "I'm mighty glad to hear that, Professor. But I'll bet those guys were busy as one-armed Shamrock pickers on St. Patrick's day." I giggled again and the Professor blushed again, the most beautiful shocking pink you ever saw, Marge.

"Well...I...yes, I suppose they were..." The Professor paused, and he seemed to have lost all track of what he was saying. My scarf and G-string seemed to have caught his attention, and I pulled them still closer to protect my girlish modesty.

"Let's keep our little minds on the business at hand, Professor," I said sharply to snap him out of it.

"Ah yes. Well, as I was saying, it wasn't too bad the first few generations. However, about a hundred years ago it was noticed that the number of virile men were not increasing in proportion to the increase in

population. We have been investigating it ever since, and have come to the conclusion that the rapidly falling rate of virility is due not to physical but to mental causes—psychological causes, we might say. And if it goes on for a few more years, Miss Dawn, the birth rate will take a fatal drop and the race itself will just... well... peter out."

Marge, honey, at this I just nearly doubled up but the Professor was so serious I controlled myself and asked, "And this is why you wanted to get in touch with Mr. Churchill?"

"Oh, yes. We felt that such a great statesman would surely be able to help us."

"Well...I don't know as that's exactly what you boys needed," I says, trying to be real intel...intelec...oh, you know what I mean, Marge. Real smart like. "Seems to me what you need is one of them head shrinkers like...what's-his-name? Freud. But—and it's a big but, my friend—all you got is me."

THE PROFESSOR, at this point, gave me another of those looks of his and said,

"Yes, Miss Dawn, all we got is you." Now, Marge, when a man of the Professor's skull power uses my kind of talk, he's pretty well gone—and all of a sudden I know how I can earn my way in this blasted 25th Century.

"Professor," I asked in my sweetest tones, "are you pretty much like the rest of the Joes in this United whatever-it-is? Would you say you were one of the more virile type?"

Again we do the shocking pink from head to foot bit. "Well...well, Miss Dawn...I must admit that up to now...well, I just haven't given such things much thought." He reached for me and I don't mind telling you, Marge, that for a minute or two there it took some doing to keep him at a distance. Finally I got a table between us and started talkin' turkey to him.

"Listen, Prof," I told him, "I think I can help you folks."

This got his full attention and stopped his leers for the moment. "You, Miss Dawn?"

"Yes, me," I said, real firm like. "I think I know how to help you and also make a living for myself."

At this he laughed and lunged across the table. "I know how you can help me right now, Miss Dawn."

This time I didn't move fast enough, Marge...but I found out that I had the right idea.

WELL, MARGE, I seem to have used up a lot of paper and you're probably getting bored, and besides they tell me the Time Machine is ready for its second trip to the 20th Century. I have to have this ready to mail so I'll close fast as I can.

As I was saying, I figured out right then and there what I was going to do to make a living in the 25th Century. And I've been doing it ever since. In fact, I'm doing so well at it, that I won't be coming back at all. You see Marge, I've become a dresser. These guys never saw a woman with clothes on before and it...well, you know how the guys in bald head row behave, honey?

I figured it out as soon as I saw how the Professor was looking at my G-string. It was the first time he had ever seen a woman he couldn't see all of, and it went to...well not ex-

actly his head. So I'm not only making a living but I'm helping to save the human race as well. Honest, Marge, it does things to these guys that nothing ever did before. Guess the local males just got tired of women with no clothes on and now when they see me putting them on... well...

Well, baby, this is all the time I've got. The enclosed jewels are part of my honest

earnings with which I'm trusting you see that my poor old mother is kept in good bourbon for the rest of her natural life.

Give my love to all the gals and guys in the show.

Love

April D. (Dawn) Perkins

P. S. You can keep the mink that Mr. Papias gave me. There just ain't no place to wear it here.

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Night Of The Robots

by Allen Wilder

illustrated by Emsh

How many people had been rep'aced, and were now robots? Rand didn't know — but he did know that the center of the conspiracy had to be located tonight. Otherwise, he and Claudie would be robots tomorrow..

BENEATH the raw whiteness of the locker fluors Rand knelt alongside the corpse and applied the bit of a tiny powered screwdriver to the place where he'd flaked away the neck skin. He touched a stud on the end of the handle and the bit spun.

The moment the long magnetized screw came out; the man's head fell off and rolled six inches on the concrete.

Rand's eyes showed crow tracks of worry at the corners. His chest was only now beginning to lose the short-breath ache built up during the fight.



Suddenly, the robot's head fell off,
and...

He cocked his head tentatively, then straightened up with a jerk when his ears detected the sound of too-heavy feet running on cement. Pocketing the screwdriver, Rand hoisted the headless body into the nearest vacant locker and piled the head—upside down with a few stray coils poking out, as it happened—in after it. Then he closed the locker door with utmost stealth and crept off through the deserted rows toward an entrance opposite the one where inhuman feet drummed loudly outside.

There were two emotions in Rand's mind: bitterness at failure, for what he'd thought was one of his valuable contacts—Charlie Nox—had turned out to be another robot. Just another clever mechanical duplicate in the silent, growing army of—how many by now? Rand's second emotion was controlled fright. The rendezvous with Nox had, patently, been a trap, and he was close to being caught in it. Just as he reached the door out of the locker room, there was a crash and the other door, concealed

behind the locker banks, was opened.

INTO THE cool Martian night, Rand went like an animal, making his way with desperate cunning over the blasted blocks of concrete and around the tangled twisty wrecks of old launching pad apparatus. The fence could not be far. A wind stirred the ochre grass that forced its way up between the cracked field blocks. The spaceport had been abandoned years earlier, its operations moved; tonight, it was a vast wasteland of bizarre wrecked metal things writhing upward in silhouette against the two moons.

Rand reached the fence, an eight-foot steel-mesh affair. He glanced back briefly, hefting the force beam taken from his coveralls. The lights in the locker shed—turned on by the bogus Nox—had gone out. In the wind and the whispering grass, clanking black shapes rushed toward him. Rand wondered if the fence were depowered, and knew he had no chance to learn this first. He backed off, ran and leaped high. Just as his fingers caught

the top a swath of light from his pursuers pinned him white-ly.

"Don't keep running, Rand," a mocking voice called. *"We know you, now. Why struggle?"*

SO MARIUS HOVE was with them, Rand thought. One human with a force of cleverly-crafted robots who looked and spoke as men, but who killed and functioned as machines—with super-high efficiency and speed. Even as the thought whizzed through his head, Rand was kicking a leg over the top bar, heedless of the light's glare. Force beams began to snap and buzz around him. His leg burned hellishy for a second just before he dropped out of the light. One coverall leg began to smolder. Rand beat it out with his hands as he ran on through the deserted dumpyards surrounding the empty field.

He looked back. The light had winked out by the fence, but they would be coming over, sure enough. Rand's only hope lay in the aerial highway shining like a lighted chain a

quarter of a mile distant. It looped back toward the gleaming pile of Port of Mars. Up and down the hills of the dumpyards Rand plunged, his chest aching again; at last he reached safety of the pedestrian lift tube. Overhead traffic hissed, a sound of sanity. Rand thrust a token in the aperture and leaped into the transparent case. Instantly it rose. Before it shot completely up to highway level, he had a glimpse of perhaps a dozen shapes stirring at the dumpyard fringe. Rand gave a quick, mocking wave to Marius Hove and his mechanical assassins.

ON THE highway was temporary respite. Knowing what he did now, he had much to do before dawn rose. He paid the fee for a seat on the pedestrian endless belt, and within half an hour he was in Port of Mars, tapping softly on Claudie Gray's apartment door. Thirty seconds later and he was kissing Claudie, then looking down at her pretty face, stroking her auburn hair as though she somehow

brought normalcy back to the night's madness.

"Poor Rand," Claudie murmured, her gray eyes worried. She led him toward the auto-kitchen, pressed a series of levers, and waited by the chute for the prime beef dinners to come sliding forth fifteen seconds later, red and steamy-hot. "It must have been horrible, shooting down a... a *thing* that looked exactly like Charlie Nox. Tell me about it. You only gave me the barest details when you called, after you got off the endless belt."

Wolfing a morsel of the beef, Rand muttered, "I got to thinking, Claudie, riding back here. Charlie Nox must have died days ago—maybe even weeks ago. After all, the I-Sector put both of us on the case last April Fool's"

Rand snorted. "That's coincidence, I know. The chief said so at the time. But it may have been prophetic, too. I-Sector's the fool, right enough." He stared glumly into the girl's eyes. "Twenty-five weeks, with the net result of fifty percent of the assigned force turning out bad. A dou-

ble-agent. Wonder when they took him over, operated. " His voice drifted off. His eyes roamed beyond the walls. His mouth had hard determination on it, purpose, a certainty of methodical revenge now.

CLAUDIE put in, "The point is, darling—Nox aside, where are they getting the recruits? Oh, we know the general process: taking human bodies, re-shaping robots into perfect exterior duplicates, sending them back into society to act the part of the real people their masters have destroyed."

"There may be thousands by now," Rand agreed. "And from the beginning, we couldn't start hauling in every person off the street and examining their necks to see if they've got a screw there." Rand shoved his plate aside, no longer hungry. "At least I learned one thing tonight, even if I didn't get the 'valuable information' Charlie was supposed to give me." He repeated the verbally quotation-marked words. "What a trap I was suckered into. In any case, Marius Hove was in the party

that chased me. I recognized the voice."

Claudie's hands gripped the edge of the table, white-knuckles. "Marius Hove? Then it is the Socio-Pragmatist party back of this."

Rand nodded. "They've the money, certainly. And a military coup would be just too easy to pass up—sometimes I think we're too enlightened in this twenty-second century. There's so little need for police or army, a plain power-grabber like Hove has a perfect opportunity. And day by day he builds the force: robots who look like real people. God knows how many women are kissing those murderous iron contraptions every morning, thinking they're kissing their husbands. Or how many little kids look up at their mothers, never dreaming. . ."

Claudie shuddered. "Even you, Rand. You might be. . ."

RAND REACHED up suddenly, his hand curved around the back of her neck. "Or *you*." Then he laughed gently. "Sorry. It was a poor joke." He pulled her forward, kissed her softly.

"Rand, I'm frightened. You'd better stay here. . ."

Doggedly he shook his head. "No, I can't. We have to find the place where they make these robots. It must be somewhere in the city, though we've had no luck. Until tonight. There was one more thing I found at the field, in the pocket of Charlie Nox." From his coverall pocket he produced a tattered slip of plastic on which had been inscribed the words, Van Daam. Claudie held it in her palm for a moment, then returned it thoughtfully.

"Van Daam?" she puzzled. "The Island of Amusement? Could the lab be *there*. . .?"

Rand pushed back his chair wearily, shook his head. "I'm not certain, but I intend to find out. If a recall correctly, Van Daam and his partner Krelig, that breed Martian, are members of the Socio-Pragmatists. I memorized all the names on the rolls when I was assigned this case. Well. . ." Reluctantly Rand leaned forward and kissed her again. "One of these days, Claudie, they'll learn I'm too

old for field work, and I'll get that desk job, and we'll be married. One of these days."

"Unless Hove or some other wretch like that gets you first. Oh Rand, it frightens me..."

HE HELD her close for a moment, reassuring her with words he himself did not believe. Then: "All of a sudden, tonight, I realized something. I *am* ready for a desk. When they shot at me tonight as I went over the wall, I knew it was true. I'd never accepted it before. It makes me feel a little cowardly. Because when this job's over. "

She pressed a finger to his lips. "It takes courage to face up to truth. You're older, that's all. A man of thirty-five shouldn't have white hair; yours has turned in just two years." Silently their gazes locked for a moment, understanding, acknowledging. Then, as though there were absolutely no emotion between them, no aching hunger for peace and a haven from the killing sizzle of a force beam, Rand started for the apartment entrance, saying: "You'll

report in to the chief at I-Sector tonight, then?"

"Yes. That telepathic old lady—the one who fancies herself a medium, third floor rear—is a marvel in times like these. Shall I tell the chief you'll need help?"

"If something happens at The Island of Amusement," Rand replied tartly, "I sincerely doubt whether there will be time for help, and I don't dare carry a transmitter. If they had track units, they could pick me up too easily. No," he said, feigning unconcern, "I can handle it. Bye, darling. Take care, and keep the doors locked. If Hove knows me now, he certainly knows you, too. " And he was gone down the gloomy apartment corridor.

ALL THE way across Port of Mars on another endless belt, Rand worried with his problem. *Where* was the laboratory in which Hove's henchmen massacred innocent people and replaced them with robots? The Island of Amusement? Quite possibly. It had a natural in-and-out flow...into

the three-hour Freud Fun House or the long shows in the Psychoanalysis Theatre, or... well, any number of in-and-out patterns. People going in, people seeming to come out hours later, the same; but not really the same. Yet how could he approach it? Try to force the issue by approaching Van Daam or the breed Krelig? No good at all, because he was one man, armed but with whatever wits he possessed and a lone force beam. If...

Suddenly Rand's spine crawled. He took out a packet of placebo cigs, held up the book of permanent matches, struck one, lighted the smoke, replaced the match, and in that instant memorized the face of the person in the fourth seat behind him on the endless belt. He replaced the match pack with its special built-in twenty-power inversion mirror. The intervening seats between his and the fourth behind were empty; all other passengers had climbed off the open belt at the last exchange. Rand was alone with his follower, and the next stop was the exchange for The Island of Amusement.

THE ENDLESS belt whirled along half a mile above the lights of the city, and the Martian night air brushed the sweat on Rand's face into coldness. He reached down and absently scratched his ankle, touching at the same time his shoe heel, into which the I-Sector people had built the detector—a tiny maze of microscopic tubes that picked up the photoelectric field emitted by the eyes of any robot. The detector activated, Rand waited. Ten seconds later a three-centimeter unit sewn deep inside his left ear lobe sent its little *beep* into his head.

A robot, all right. More than coincidence. Marius Hove was on to him, and they were after him, and perhaps they'd lead him straight to the lab...*if*. If he could stay alive.

Pretending that his cigaret had gone out Rand used the permanent pack once more. His pursuer was a woman. At least the shell that surrounded the sexless mechanical assassin was formed in the shape of a burly, orange-haired creature with a shapeless thick body, a

massive jaw and powerful arms. She feigned the reading of a news tissue sheet. Rand noticed with a start that only two seats now separated him from his pursuer.

The endless belt glided beneath a dot-perforated sign which spelled out the coming exchange. Far below Rand saw the glitter of The Island of Amusement and rose from his seat, stepping across to the slower passenger aisle. The ersatz matron tossed its tissue sheet to the wind and waddled after him.

RAND QUICKLY passed from the passenger aisle onto the canopied area which housed the pedestrian lifts beside the highway. Behind him, heels tapping in a neurotic rhythm, the robot hurried in pursuit, carrying the hundred-odd additional poundage of its false flesh as lightly as a feather. Rand's spine crawled. This was no amateurishly-inept female on his trail, but an oiled, buzzing engine of death unhampered by its outer trappings. Rand deposited his fare and went sailing down the lift tube. The robot had taken the

tube next to the one in which he was riding, and they were scarcely twenty feet apart when Rand dog-trotted toward the light-spangled towers marking the bridge across the sham moat that surrounded the city's mammoth amusement park.

Once through the turnstiles into the gleeful jabber of the crowd, Rand paused a moment to get his bearings. The orange-haired mechanical thing chasing him pretended to loiter at a stand where a vendor hawked Calciburgers for expectant mothers. Rand was startled by a gush of flame and a roar over his shoulder, turned and saw the burning holocaust of a rocket's stern end settling vertically into a launching bed in the middle of a blackened concrete area. A long queue wound along the fence circling the launching area, and a barker on a bull-horn shouted:

"Only a few more spaces left, ladies and gents. Board *The Carousel* for a two-hour rocket trip across the deserts. You say you've never had cash enough to jet to Terra? Never

been in a rocket in your life? Just eleven solars, folks, six solars for the kids, and you get the complete tour—genuine authentic acceleration and deceleration, plus a free-fall side trip above the atmosphere, this voyage only."

RAND WAITED a moment longer, drawn by an inexplicable sense of inner urgency, until the passengers came down the ladders from the gaudily-painted old rocket. Perhaps a hundred people came across the concrete, heading for the concession exit, and by the time the first one had cleared the wire gate, Rand's face was a mask of chill sweat. He moved closer...

...and the three-centimeter unit sewn in his earlobe went wild with beeping.

There wasn't even a single separation between tones. The closer Rand moved to the group coming off *The Carousel*, the shriller the signal became. His mouth tightened with a grim smile of satisfaction, just as a sixth sense warned him that he had neglected his follower. A thick

shape hurled itself through the corner of his field of vision.

Using his left leg as the pivot, Rand twisted frantically while his hand groped for the force beam in his coveralls. The orange-haired robot struck him like a boulder, crashing him backwards across the mid-way; then the robot's inflexible fingers gripped his wrist. Rand uttered a stricken cry of pain between his teeth and released his hold on the force beam, dropping it on the ground. The robot's other hand swept up and chopped swiftly at Rand's neck so that a moment later the robot had looped an arm beneath his shoulders and was dragging him through the unconcerned crowd in a perfect imitation of a rather large, belligerent wife supporting her drunken husband.

RAND'S HEAD whirled and blurred. Ahead he saw and smelled a grimy black alleyway between lighted building, toward which the robot propelled him steadily. The robot shoved him. Rand sprawled face-first in the refuse-littered

mud. He scraggled onto his back in time to see the robot lifting the hem of its skirt grotesquely, to better aim its leaded foot. Rand stared at the foot, dazedly, wondering that anything so cunningly executed, so normal-looking, could weigh three times heavier than it looked. In that instant, counterpointed by a mechanical buzz of triumph from the robot's painted mouth, the foot struck Rand's jaw and smashed him down through endless red chasms into eventual darkness.

Oh you kid, how's your id? Do you know what Oedipus did...?"

Rand heard the words scratching at the edge of his conscious mind, growing louder as the tune of the amplified song clarified itself. The jingle was being shouted over a multitrack recording by a well-known vocalist, so that two dozen different sound tracks, some weirdly atonal, blended into a blasting whole that threatened to burst his head. Rand remembered the noise. It was the music from The Freud Fun House.

HE OPENED his eyes, seeing a small lighted office for an instant, with a long, intricate wall control board at one side, on which some lights blinked and others merely burned steady. There was a snap of fingers and the lights went out, replaced by a needle-sharp beam directed to a narrow area that encompassed his eyes. The music rocked the walls of the little room, and when Rand tried to jerk aside from the play of light, the beam followed him.

Hoo hah hee, look and see, what Krafft-Ebbing did to me...

Rand waited, perspiring. Close at hand a voice said mockingly, "This is indeed a pleasure, especially so since in the space of a single night I am able to dispose of the last I-Sector agent who could link me with the growing force of artificial creatures wandering over Mars just like normal human beings." The voice chuckled, a brittle sound. "Your friend Charlie Nox was—ah—transformed several weeks ago. I must say you rather damaged him, taking his head off

as you did earlier this evening. But he's repaired now."

"Others know about you, Hove," Rand said. "Several others."

"Don't try to bluff me, Rand," came the cold reply. "What do I care if your chief thinks the Socio-Pragmatists are connected? You're the real link, you and that Claudie girl. Oh, we'll take care of her once we finish with you. Don't bristle so, my friend. What's the matter? Do you find that light so annoying?"

RAND FOUND it difficult to control his temper or his reason with the lancing beam directly on his face. Dimly in the darkness he could see lights on the control board—whatever *that* was for—still winking or burning, little red or yellow or white or green insect's eyes. The remark about Claudie had chilled him even more deeply.

Hove seemed to sense his thoughts, for he said: "By this time tomorrow, Rand, you'll be one of our most valuable assets—going about your business, uttering words of reassurance to your chief. Oh, of

course, it won't be *really* you. We'll have flushed you down the lye pits under this island, or burned you up in the fuel chute of *The Carousel*, depending upon where we do the switch. Our technicians are already at work on the outer shell for your robot. It's a rush job, but they're doing splendidly..."

"Then *The Carousel* is your lab?" Rand grated. "You take innocent people, kill them on the rocket voyage, replace them..."

"Of course. Our men can turn out adequate robot replacements in an hour and ten minutes, using assembly line methods."

"HOW MANY are there, Hove?"

"Roughly nine thousand. I have been working over three years."

"Nine thousand? That's hardly enough for a military coup. They're not fighters..."

"Oh, but they are. Outwardly, they resembled ordinary members of the masses; but inside, they're wired and waiting for the signal to attack. Their weapons are built right

into special compartments in their stomachs."

Staggered by the horror of it, driven nearly blind by the light in his face, Rand could not reply. In that instant a panel opened, a square of light and a man's shadow were revealed, and then a voice spoke anxiously to Hove: "In the third sector, sir. One of the units has broken down. A traffic patrolman at an intersection. The wiring in his head.. "

"I have other things to do, Van Daam," came the reply. "Don't annoy me with trivialities. Kill him, of course." The invisible Van Daam blotted out a portion of the control board, and dimly Rand saw one of the yellow lights turn an intense blue color, then go black. Hardly a moment had passed when the panel opened again and someone new arrived. The shadow of the new arrival had a dome-like head. Krelig, the breed Martian, Rand thought.

"Mr. Hove," Krelig lisped in the dark. "The Claudie girl just came through the gates..."

RAND UTTERED a startled cry. *Claudie?* Oh, damn her foolish little head for worrying about him, for risking her life following him ... Hove laughed. "Up with the lights, please." There was a stir in the darkened room. "We must dispose of Mr. Rand so that we may deal with the lady immediately. Oh, this is most fortunate..."

Rand squeezed his lids tight closed, so that when the brilliance of the lights pressed against his eyes, he could see a moment later. Hove, a small, immaculately-garbed figure with shining hair and narrow lips, faced him between the Martian, Krelig, in a soiled light blue robe, and the fat, flazen-mustached Van Daam. Krelig held a force beam in his webbed hand. Van Daam stepped to another door, pulled it open. Hove gestured. In there Rand saw a cold operating table waited beneath vast blazing overhead lights.

This was the last desperate moment. The music from the midway yammered against the flimsy walls of the chamber. Rand turned, walked toward

the operating theatre, feeling in his pocket the one object they had left him, the screwdriver. The angle of his body gave him just the fraction of time he needed. His hand dove into his coveralls, yanked the screwdriver free and pressed the stud. The bit whirled. Rand flung the weapon, and dived low.

The screwdriver spun and dug its way into the center of Van Daam's skull.

KRELIG wasted no time. His force beam set the wall burning where Rand's head had been a moment before. Rand, running, ripped the screwdriver free with a tug, and Van Daam toppled. Krelig was circling him, trying for a shot, while Marius Hove, hands fluttering, hunted for a weapon. Hove was nearest. Rand flung out his arm, caught Hove's neck in the vee angle, and jerked Hove around before him as a shield. Krelig screamed oaths and waited in frustration, afraid to shoot. In that second Rand knew horror:

Hove's neck had been *too solid*...

Hove was too small and light to struggle effectively. Rand had no trouble flaking away the plastic coating from the back of his neck. The fatal screw was revealed, together with a small brass plate which read, *Interstellar Auto Servant Company, Serial No. 338994256*. Rand pressed his mouth close to Hove's ear: "I've found you out. And Marius Hove is dead, like all the rest, eh?"

"You devil," the robot screeched. "You..."

RAND WASTED no time. Though Hove yowled and cursed and kicked, Rand reached up, fitted the bit to the screw head and pressed the button. The screw came out and Hove slumped forward with a series of metallic joint-squeaking sounds. Even as he lifted off the head, Rand wondered where it had all begun. In a mistake, certainly. A mistake someone at the robot company had made inadvertently, creating a too-perfect, too-clever machine. They could check back and Rand felt that records would show, perhaps several years back, a robot disappearing from the factory un-

der mysterious circumstances, apparently under its own power. A robot that had dreamed of being more than a servant, a robot who had killed a powerful man, Hove, and set about planning...

Krelig uttered a hoarse scream, dropped the force beam and fled when Rand held the bogus Hove's mechanical head and let the body fall clanking to the floor.

For long moments Rand's shoulders shook, in sick reaction. Then he stepped to the control board, fighting to overcome his sick horror. He studied the board for five minutes, then began to throw switches. One light winked out. Then another. Then more. Finally the board was dark and—presumably—the robots were dead. But the horror lay in thinking of the nine thousand who had been *replaced*...

THROUGH a maze of paperboard corridors Rand found his way out of the office in the rear of The Freud Fun House, walked up an alleyway toward the shouting midway, still carrying the head of Hove

in the crook of his arm. People paid no attention. They were too concerned by the bodies littered everywhere you looked. Men, women, even children, fallen over in odd mechanical postures.

I'm too old, Rand thought. I want the desk now. I'm too old, and I'm glad it's finished.

Then, through a tear in the crowd he spotted Claudie Gray. She was searching faces around her and at last she saw him too, and began to run. Rand walked forward rapidly. He dropped the head and left it lying on its side, staring up at the lights. A passer-by kicked it.

Another looked down and emitted an awed exclamation. But the knots around the corpses of the robots—like the knots around nine thousand other corpses all across Mars drew the attention of the curious. Rand put his arms around Claudie and his fingers touched the back of her neck—he froze suddenly. The head of Serial No. 338994256 lay scowling...

Beyond The Snake Planet

by Bill Wesley

Suddenly, Dave Norwood realized what he had let himself in for, taking the post of commander of this expedition. There was nothing for him on whatever planet he helped them find—but Norwood could never go back. But—if something happened to colonist Lor Halvorsen, and Lor's lovely blonde wife became a lovely blonde widow...

Complete Novelet

CAPTAIN DAVE NORWOOD stood in the pilot room of the *Pegasus* and watched a blue-nosed space-taxi glide out toward the big ship.

"That's the last cargo," his radio operator said. "One more passenger load on the way."

Norwood said, "All right." Radio silence now on everything but intercom."

He switched on a viewscreen that gave him an external picture of the ship and watched the crew of men loading the last few crates from the preceding cargo-taxi. It was hard to keep from shouting at them to get the lead out. They weren't experienced spacemen, just some volunteers he had called for from the passenger list—even so, they were far too clumsy, he thought—too clumsy and too slow. Not one of them was able to hop out into space without glancing back a half-dozen times to make sure that the big ship didn't move away while he was out there fumbling with a crate.

Norwood grimaced. "Crate" was right. That's what the whole ship was—a crate. A big, awkwardly-built, dumb-bell-shaped crate—with passenger quarters at each end, and the crew and power plant housed in a smaller bulb in the middle. What a puzzle it would be for some future generation of explorers when they found it rusting on a distant planet some day. It had been assembled mostly from parts taken from derelict space stations and twentieth century rocket ships

abandoned on the Moon and Mars. The only thing new about it was its nuclear power plant—that had cost Dr. Kettering's group a good part of their treasury.

Well, Norwood sighed, it was their money. He'd try to see that they got the most out of it. The ship could probably outrun anything but a government hot-shot; they'd just have to trust to luck on that.

FOR THE hundredth time Norwood asked himself how he had gotten mixed up with such a motley crowd as John Kettering's Galactic Exploration Group. Not only had he thrown his ten year career as a government space pilot out the window; he had probably committed suicide as well. The expedition had not been approved by the government. Unapproved flights such as these were considered treasonable, and they'd be attacked once they were clear of the atmosphere. Somehow, such traitors were never brought back to Earth for trial; the ship and its entire personnel was always destroyed trying to escape.

And since they had enough

fuel for only seven star-orbitings, and about the same number of planet-orbitings, Norwood figured the chances of finding a livable planet were about as thin as cosmic dust. Even if they did find a planet, he shuddered to think what it would be like leading an expeditionary force of Kettering's colonists against whatever wild creatures they might encounter on it. Worst of all, suppose everything worked out just fine and dandy, what would Dave Norwood do then? Build a log cabin and become a farmer like the rest of the fanatics? So what, if Earth had become crowded, and laws had become too strict! It hadn't bothered him; he was a spaceman, not a weed-puller...

HE TURNED his attention back to the men outside and spoke into a microphone hanging around his neck.

"Lieutenant Clive, Captain Norwood. Last cargo coming out. Slight mix-up I guess. Taxi has blue nose cone. Double-time the loading; give preference to fuel and food. Be prepared to jump aboard on sixty-second notice. Over."

He watched on the view-screen as his space-suited supply officer detached himself from the loading crew and looked around for the next cargo-taxi.

"Roger," came the reply. "This ought to do it. Wilco."

Norwood clicked off his microphone and muttered under his breath, "It had better do it. There aren't any supply depots in space."

He turned to his radar operator. "Any patrol ships in sight?"

The radar man's eyes never left the fourteen inch scope before him as he said, "Negative, sir."

Norwood then signaled to his executive officer, Commander Mel Durkin, to take over the ship's instrumentation. He twisted a remote control selector switch hanging from his belt and clicked on his microphone again. "Dr. Kettering," he called. "I have some time now. I can talk to the latest arrivals if you'll assemble them, please. Over."

The group chief acknowledged the call and said, "I'll have them in the main lounge right away."

NORWOOD then switched the viewscreen to the interior of the ship's lounge and let his eye wander over the faces of the men and women who began filing in. Damn if they didn't look like colonists already, he thought. Then his gaze flicked over the pert nose and blue eyes of a slim blonde girl, and he felt a surge of warm blood course through him. Now there was the kind of doll who belonged in a colonizing cadre! Then he saw that she was walking beside a well-built young man who obviously adored her, and who carried a baby in his arms that looked like both of them. Well, so much for that! He might have known that there wouldn't be any of that kind of stuff kickin' around loose...

He cleared his throat and began to speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Captain Norwood, your ship's commander. I want to welcome you aboard the *Pegasus* and give you my word that my crew and I will do everything possible to assure your comfort and safety from here to your ultimate destination. I assume that you have already

reached an agreement with Dr. Kettering regarding your obligations to him as colonists; all such arrangements are strictly between yourselves and Dr. Kettering. As commander of this ship, however, and therefore responsible for the safety of everyone aboard, there are certain obligations which I must demand of you, too.

"I must ask that you obey the requests of my duly commissioned officers with respect to all items directly or indirectly connected with the operation of the ship, especially in cases of emergency. I must ask that you submit without equivocation to the order of suspended animation as set forth by my command. This order will not necessarily be by families, but will be by assignments. All women and children will go into suspended animation as soon as we clear the solar system. The men will go in as they can be spared from their assigned duties. For some there will be shifts of perhaps six months work out of each five or six years of elapsed time.

"This is unavoidable. The ship is not one hundred percent automatic. Star systems must

be investigated. Lookouts must be established to guard against seizure by alien forces—if there are any. Radio contact with the other Galactic Exploration Groups must be maintained if we are to take advantage of their discoveries. We will do everything in our power to see that no man ages more than a few years over his wife and family, but please do not expect us to be able to predict what emergencies we may encounter in interstellar space. Suffice it to say that everyone will be expected to do his part according to the circumstances.”

HE PAUSED and glanced again at the blue-eyed blonde. He was coming to realize more and more that he had been an idiot to undertake the mission in the first place. Of course all the women would be married—the least he could have done was to bring along a woman of his own. What the hell was he going to do for the rest of his life—wait for some colonist to die?

He forced his thoughts back to the moment and continued

with his prepared speech. “In order to cut down on the aging time as much as possible, I would like to talk with any passengers who have had training or experience in any of the sciences or technologies—particularly radar, radio communication, astronautics, or nuclear mechanics. The more people we have who can work a shift in one of these fields the shorter the shifts can be.”

HE WENT on to tell them of the itinerary of the *Pegasus*, explaining that it would pass the other two ships and investigate the star systems further out. The first star to be investigated was Gamma Pegasi, for which the ship had been named. The only familiar stars to be visited were Castor, Pollux, and Capella. The others were the lesser known Delta Herculis, Beta Cassiopeia, and Gamma Virginis. These star systems—if any of the stars on the list had system—plus those to be investigated by the first two groups, represented the most likely prospect within a reasonable distance of the solar system.

Pollux was the furthest one out, and it was fifty light years away. If they had to go that far, it would take them at least eighty years. Even if they found a planet revolving about Gamma Pegasi, they would be well over fifty years reaching it.

"I don't tell you all this to dishearten you in any way," he concluded. "I simply want you to understand that this is no picnic we're on, and that we may have to take some drastic measures before we're finished. As for our chances of success, I'll say only this. I have every expectation of reaching all the stars on our list. If one of them has a livable planet revolving about it, I promise you we'll find it."

He switched the screen back to an outside view and started to call his supply officer. The radar operator stopped him.

"A patrol ship at eleven thousand, sir. They may have spotted us. They're accelerating."

NORWOOD glanced at the radar panel. There was a

blip at eleven thousand miles, and it was closing steadily.

"Put it on PPI," he said. "Let's have a better look at its bearing."

The radar man flipped the Plan-Position-Indicator switch and the scope presentation changed instantly to polar coordinates, oriented with respect to the Earth's center. The *Pegasus*' own position was marked by a luminous dot moving about the Earth at a distance of four thousand miles from the surface. The patrol ship showed as a fainter dot two thousand miles out. But while the *Pegasus* was in free fall and orbiting the Earth slowly, the patrol ship was swinging out in an ever-widening spiral and moving much faster.

"Don't mind using the government's fuel, do they?" Norwood muttered. "See what the computer says about contact time—and give me the time for three thousand, too. They won't fire before then."

He turned to his radio operator. "Any interrogation?"

The technician shook his head.

II

NORWOOD glanced at the outside view and swore. The blue-nosed cargo-taxi had just jettisoned its load and had made a sloppy job of it. "What the hell happened out there?" he called over his intercom.

Lieutenant Clive's voice answered him bitterly. "The damn fool matched our course speed okay but he was still moving out. Now we'll have to use nozzles to go after the cargo."

Norwood exhaled through his teeth and clenched his fists. "All right, do the best you can," he said, with forced calmness. "Remember—fuel and food first. There's a patrol ship at eleven thousand—might catch us in a half-hour or so. Change sixty second alert to three minutes. You'll need it, the way that stuff is scattered."

He watched his supply officer take off after a volunteer who was having trouble with his repulsion nozzle. The hardest thing to teach a beginner was to point the nozzle away from where he wanted to go. It

was like teaching a center fielder to run toward the wall while looking toward home plate. Invariably a novice with a repulsion nozzle went into a small panic as he approached an object in space. He either gave it a far wider berth than necessary, or he became confused and plowed into it.

Norwood turned away from the screen with a pained expression on his face. He couldn't spare any more of his regular crew to help with the loading—not with a patrol ship bearing out toward them. His agreement with Kettering was that the *Pegasus* would avoid combat as long as possible—but that didn't include defensive measures. He would need all of his instrument technicians and anti-missile men, and he might need more than that. Agreement or no agreement, he wasn't going to be anybody's clay pigeon...

"Twenty-seven minutes to contact," the radar operator said.

NORWOOD relaxed a little at that. At least it wasn't a hot-shot. He turned to Durkin, his executive officer, and said,

"Anti-missile positions in ten minutes. Target will be in plane of ecliptic, between six and nine o'clock. Fire at my command."

To his radar operator he said, "Give me a quick reading on anything they shoot at us."

The radar man nodded and said, "Here comes a taxi. The last passenger load probably."

Norwood studied the scope. It showed a small ship about a thousand miles out from Earth. Apparently it had already cut acceleration. It was moving considerably slower than the patrol ship. It was much closer, too, however, so it wasn't easy to estimate its contact time.

"Okay, keep your eye on it," he said. "Let me know if the patrol takes any action against it."

He glanced toward the view-screen again to check on the loading operations. Some of the crates were several hundred yards away already, drifting along with the ship, but seeking their own balance between, centrifugal force and the Earth's gravitational attraction—each one trying to become an independent satellite of Earth. Lieutenant Clive had

given up trying to instruct his makeshift crew in the use of propulsion nozzles; now he was rounding up as many crates as he could handle at one time and shooting them back to the ship. The crates had no weight in space, and theoretically a repulsion nozzle could move an indefinite number of them, but they had inertia, and it took forever to get them moving if a man tried to push too many at once.

"Twenty minutes to contact," radar said. "Twelve minutes to missile range."

"They're interrogating the taxi," radio reported.

NORWOOD grabbed a spare earphone and listened in. The taxi pilot was saying that he had a ship full of tourists, cruising out to the five thousand mile zone. The interrogator wanted to know why his ship carried an orange nose cone.

"We had trouble with some of our ships," the pilot replied. "I know it's a misdemeanor, but, golly, you wouldn't want me to lose the gravy from twelve bug-eyed tourists, would you?"

Norwood checked the PPI screen. "They've got a telescope," he said, half-aloud. "They wouldn't be able to see the color of his nose cone without it—not at that range. That means they'll be reading our markings next."

He called Lieutenant Clive on the intercom again. "May have to order you in pretty damn quick. Concentrate on fuel. Let everything else go."

By God, if we starve to death we'll do it at high speed, he thought. Then to Durkin he said, "Get your men set at anti-missile stations. Don't shoot at Pyros. Wait for confirmation."

"They've ordered the taxi alongside," radio said, "but they're going too fast for him."

Norwood laughed. "Good! That shows they're confused. What's the time to missile range now?"

"Eight-thirty."

NORWOOD caught a glimpse of someone entering the pilot room from the passenger shoot. It was the nusky young man he had noticed sitting beside the blonde in the lounge a few minutes earlier.

"Yeah, what do you want?" he asked bluntly.

"My name is Lor Halvorsen," the man said. "I—I've had a little radar school. I didn't know if you."

"How much?" Norwood snapped at him.

"A year and a half—at Evanston."

Norwood examined him critically. "Why didn't you finish? Get washed out?"

Halvorsen appeared embarrassed. "I just decided to try something else. I didn't want to go into space then. I wish now that I had."

Norwood made a face. He hated himself for his attitude. After all, the guy was volunteering for ship's duty—he wasn't asking any favors. It was just that—well, looking at Halvorsen, Dave Norwood kept thinking of the blue-eyed blonde with the slim figure—and the easy way of walking—and of smiling...

"We're busy as hell right now," he said. "Sit down by Blake there and keep your eyes open—and thanks for coming in," he added reluctantly. "I appreciate it."

"They shot at the taxi sir," radar said.

NORWOOD turned to the radar scope. The radar man increased the intensity and they watched a faint pin-point of light move away from the patrol ship and curve in toward the taxi. When it was somewhere within a hundred miles or so, it suddenly disappeared. For a moment Norwood didn't know what had happened. There was no flare—no explosion...

"Pyro," the radar man said.

Norwood almost contradicted him. Then he remembered that they were watching on a radar scope, not a television screen. Of course they wouldn't see the flare.

"Yeah," he said self-consciously. "Now we'll see what they do. If they go after the taxi, they won't catch us; if they don't go after the taxi we'll know they're on our tail for sure."

He felt foolish inside. Foolish and angry with himself for getting upset over a slim blonde girl who was already married and who didn't know

that Dave Norwood was alive anyway...

"What was that shot?" Durkin asked from across the room.

"They shot a pyro at the taxi," Norwood told him. Then he realized that Durkin couldn't see the taxi on his firing scope. Naturally he'd have a blow-up of the area around the patrol ship. "There's a taxi coming out," he said. "For God's sake, don't mistake it for a missile when it comes onto your scope."

"One minute to missile range," radar said.

"Eyes open now," Norwood told Durkin. "Don't get over-anxious. When they shoot at us you'll have plenty of time for counterfire after we determine the course of their missile."

"Here it comes," radar said.

Norwood stepped to his side and waited. The radar man checked the computer. After about three seconds he said, "Negative, sir."

NORWOOD tapped Durkin on the shoulder. "It's a miss, but heads up. They didn't

bother to interrogate. That means they know who we are. They'll stay outside and try to destroy us. If they change course, don't wait for a command; blast 'em out of space."

He switched the large view-screen to a general outside picture and everyone watched for the missile.

"Missile coming," he told Lieutenant Clive over the intercom. "Try to keep the panic down. It's a miss. Probably a pyro."

Clive had no sooner said, "Roger," when the missile appeared as a fast streak on the viewscreen. Then all of space seemed to light up with a blinding glare as thousands of tiny particles, exploding from the pyrotechnical shell, shot out a hundred yards or so and then exploded themselves. The intensity was almost unbelievable. In the old days of war on Earth, the artillery had sometimes used a shell called a *screamin' mcemie* that had made a weird noise as it went through the air and then had exploded with a tremendous bang. It had not had much destructive power, but it had been a terrible thing to hear,

according to the accounts that Norwood had read of it. Well, he doubted that it had been any worse than a pyro. There was no noise in space, and really no glare either—it just seemed that way from the blinding effect. Even when he knew what to expect, a pyro always gave him a strange feeling that he didn't care to analyze. He could imagine what the reaction had been among the passengers—and among the men working outside.

THE RADIO reported, "They've ordered us to stand by for boarding."

Norwood snorted. Capitulation would save no one now, but the patrol had to go through the motions. There had to be the pretense that an unauthorized expedition *could* surrender and come back for trial. Few, very few, realized that one or two "traitor" expeditions had changed their minds at the last moment and cooperated. The patrol liked that; it made for less danger in the destruction. Then the reports would show virtuous indignation and sorrow that the "surrender" was just a trick by means of which

traitors could escape from good-hearted patrolmen.

"Stand by? We're in free fall." Very probably, none of the colonists realized their exact situation. He added, "I'll bet a hundred bucks that's Syzmanski's ship. He's probably turning pages right now to see what he's supposed to do next."

He glanced at the computer tape. Five and a half minutes to contact. No time to pick up the last load of passengers—unless.

He studied the PPI scope, estimating times and drawing imaginary vectors in his brain. Finally he shouted, "By God, we'll try it. Contact the taxi with your tightest beam. Two degrees ought to pin-point him. Tell him to stand by for instructions. Don't let the patrol intercept your call."

He turned to the intercom and shouted, "Clive! Drop everything. Get in here pronto. Two minutes."

"Taxi standing by," radio reported.

Norwood leaned over the operator's shoulder and spoke into the microphone. "Listen fella. Listen carefully. Maintain present bearing with re-

spect to Earth, but dive tangentially. Dive with all you've got. Blackout your passengers if you must, but dive. Right now!"

The taxi pilot didn't bother to acknowledge. He dived.

NORWOOD watched the radar scope long enough to see if the man had understood, then he fairly yelped with excitement. "Wait'll old Syzmanski sees this maneuver. He'll throw his book out the discard tube."

He ran around the pilot room checking instruments. "Stand by for eight *g's* acceleration," he told Durkin. "Get the passengers all strapped down. Same in here. We'll see how good our automatic is. I'll ride herd from a stand-up chair. Everybody else down. Is Clive in?"

Somebody said yes. Norwood checked the position of the patrol ship once more. Four and a half minutes to contact. "Hah! That's what *they* think!"

He strapped himself into a vertical contour chair, then pulled an auxiliary control panel within reach. He glanced

around to see that everyone was tied down, then said, with a calmness that surprised even himself, "Okay, I've got her now. Stand by to grab the brass ring."

He eased the ship out of orbit with a blast from the starboard rockets, then, stage by stage, he punched in full power.

THE WEIGHT was terrific, but the feeling of exultation that came over him more than made up for it. For six days the *Pegasus* had fallen around Earth from four thousand miles out, storing cargo and picking up passengers. The patrol watched idly, he knew, waiting until their quarry would be at fullest concentration. Why annihilate a handful when all could be wiped out?

Norwood had just about gone stir-crazy. Now, at last, there was action. It might be his last chance to play space-poker with one of his brother-alumni from the Academy, and he was going to make the most of it.

He watched on the PPI scope as the dot that represented the taxi began moving faster and

faster as the pilot dived back toward Earth. He watched his own dot begin to gain, to draw into a slight trail on the scope. Damn, the ship had guts! Too bad the taxi wasn't a hot-shot; then he'd really show Syzman-ski something.

He kept his fingers hovering over the control panel, but the automatic pilot took care of everything, slowing the ship into a matching trajectory with the diving taxi.

Two hundred miles from Earth, with the taxi travelling close to eighty thousand miles an hour, the *Pegasus* drew alongside and threw out her clamps. As smoothly as if they were performing on a motion picture set, the passengers walked across from the taxi to the *Pegasus*.

Norwood invited the pilot and crew to come along, but they declined. "We're safe enough," the pilot said. "They got our number all right, but the ship that's registered under that number can prove it wasn't out today. They'll never find us."

NORWOOD waved him off and disengaged the clamps.

The *Pegasus* roared around Earth barely a hundred and fifty miles out. It orbited with a terrific kick and swung halfway to the Moon on the other side. Syzmanski in the patrol ship—if it was Syzmanski, and Norwood refused to think otherwise—was nowhere in sight. That is, he was nowhere until the radar operator turned up the intensity to near-maximum. Then they saw him almost enveloped in ground-clutter as he poured government money out through his tailpipes, but to no avail. The surprise move had left the patrolman flatfooted in space; he had no hope of catching them.

Norwood grinned faintly. It had worked only because this was the first time an unauthorized expedition had had an experienced hand in command, who knew fully what they were up against. Ordinarily, one patrol ship handled the situation. And even then, he admitted to himself, he'd had the advantage of knowing that man opposing him.

Syzmanski would have gotten anyone else, he thought; and anyone else might have gotten Dave Norwood. He'd

planned the attempt for a time when he was sure Syzmanski would be on duty.

"Somebody's reporting our antics to a hot-shot on the Moon," radio reported.

Norwood only smiled. "Too late," he said. "By the time we come around again, we'll be a million miles out. They couldn't catch us either."

He unstrapped himself from the vertical chair and turned the controls over to the technicians. The excitement was over now. Time to settle into space routine. "Durkin, Clive," he called. "Let's go. Ask the other officers to come in. See if we can get something organized around here now."

III

DR. JOHN KETTERING didn't work a regular shift aboard the *Pegasus*; as colony chief, he felt that his responsibility should begin when a potential homesite was being explored. In space, he was perfectly willing to let the ship's commander maintain full control. Kettering left instructions to be awakened, however, when the ship

orbited a planet of any description, no matter how unlikely a living place it might appear. Thus it was, early in the twenty-second century, when the *Pegasus* was fifty-two years out from Earth, Kettering was awakened.

After hurrying through the standard medical check-up, and swallowing a half-dozen anonymous pills, he moved through the passenger shoot to the pilot room. There he found Captain Norwood and three other men gazing at a tiny glob of light on the large view-screen.

"Well, good morning, Doc," Norwood said, somewhat boisterously. "Sleep well?"

Kettering couldn't repress a grin. He wondered how many times in the fifty-two years those same words had been spoken.

"We just swooshed around Gamma Pegasi," Norwood told him. "There's a planet there all right, but it looks dead to me—and it's awful damned small."

Kettering studied the view-screen. They were too far from the planet for him to see anything but a tiny disk. Apparently the *Pegasus* had made

one tour of the system and was coming in closer. The star itself—Gamma Pegasi, for which their ship had been named—was somewhere behind them, he guessed. He kept his eyes on the viewscreen nevertheless; he wanted to regain his composure before facing the captain again. It had been something of a shock to him to see the change that had come over the man. It wasn't simply that he appeared older by a year or two; he looked weaker somehow—dissipated, perhaps, or sick; Kettering wasn't sure.

KETTERING could easily imagine what the trip had been for the space commander—standing short watches over a period of fifty-two years, brooding over his decision to leave everything behind and join forces with a group of colonists. It had occurred to Kettering, too late for action, that the officers of the *Pegasus* might prove to be a troublesome element once the colony was established. Not one of them had brought along a wife and family; and, if he remembered correctly, the oldest unmarried girl on the ship was

only about thirteen or fourteen. Most of them were much younger.

"There's a liquid vapor of some kind," Norwood was saying. "Might be water; might not. We'll know when we get a little closer. Whatever atmosphere there is, it seems confined to that vapor, and it isn't very damn thick."

Kettering nodded absently. He was wondering if either of the two authorized expeditions had found anything. He was about to ask, when Norwood anticipated him.

"You'll want to study the radiograms from the other ships," he said. "Number One is in its fifth orbiting; that's around Procyon. They haven't found anything yet. Number Two is looking at Fomalhaut. Negative all around so far. Half a dozen planets reported, but most of them dead. One had a poisonous atmosphere. One was all water. I suspect that's what we're about to find here."

MUCH TO Kettering's disappointment, the captain proved to be right. The only planet revolving about Gamma Pegasi checked out to be a soft

little ball only fifteen hundred miles in diameter, and completely covered with water. Kettering felt the first hint of doubt creep through him as he heard Norwood give the order to resume stellar cruising. He tried to tell himself that it was only none-out-of-one so far, but the fear was in him and it wouldn't go away.

"How about a drink, Doc?" Norwood invited. "No use going back to bed on an empty stomach."

Kettering accepted a brandy, then shuddered as he watched Norwood drink a double shot of sixty-year-old bourbon.

"Don't let it get you down," Norwood said. "That's only our first miss, and a cheap one at that. If we can make 'em all that way we're good for nine or ten orbitings. Where the money goes is when we have to go in for a real close look at a planet. About six or seven of them, and we've had it."

All of a sudden, Kettering realized that he was seeing a side of the captain that was new to him—probably because he had been too busy to notice. The man was not going to be disappointed at all if they

failed to find a planet to colonize. Here in space, in his own ship, he was master. On a planet he would be only another colonist—and very likely a restless one at that. He might easily feel that he'd have less to lose in failure than in success..

"Sit down, Doc, I want to ask you something," Norwood said, pouring himself another double shot of bourbon and leaning forward awkwardly. "Something confidential. Just between you and me—understand?"

He shielded his mouth from the other men in the room and said, almost in a whisper, "What do you think we ought to do?"

KETTERING was dumbfounded. He didn't care much for the physical state that the captain was approaching, and he cared even less for the question. It forced him to face a possibility that he had refused to face so far, even in his own mind. He especially didn't like the idea of having to face it *out loud*, and with a half-drunk space commander.

"What do you mean, what

would we do?" he hedged. "Our plan is to live out our lives aboard the *Pegasus* if necessary. What other choice would we have?"

Norwood stared at him with raised eyebrows for a moment, then snorted. "Come on, Doc, don't be so naive. They're asleep now, aren't they? What would be the sense of wakin' 'em up just to tell 'em they were going to starve to death out here in space? Come on now, what would be the sense of that?"

Kettering was beginning to feel uncomfortable. He wanted another glass of brandy himself, but he didn't want to encourage the captain to have any more. He rose from the table and took a stroll around the pilot room, trying to make up his mind what to say. There was no reason why they wouldn't be able to live indefinitely on the ship if necessary. They could grow their own food, including meat; and they could manufacture all the oxygen they needed. They would have to exercise extreme discipline of course, and that was one of the things they were running away from, but...

HE WAS STARTLED out of his reverie when one of the men on duty spoke to him.

"Don't you remember me, Dr. Kettering?" the young man asked. "My name is Halvorsen. We had a quick interview one night in Phoenix. Right after my wife and I were arrested for having a baby without passing the qualification tests."

Kettering blinked his eyes and examined the young fellow more closely. "Yes, of course, I remember you," he lied. "How are you taking the trip? You look great, I'd say."

"I feel fine," Halvorsen told him. "A little disappointed after the false hopes back there, but I guess you are, too. I wish I could tell you how much we appreciate the way your organization got us out of that scrape back there on Earth. They were going to take our baby away from us, and..."

Kettering mumbled something about being glad everything had worked out all right and continued moving about the room. He glanced back toward the captain once and was relieved to see him replace the cap on the whiskey bottle and store it away in a cabinet.

Chances are he's already forgotten what he was talking about, Kettering mused. But he knew that he, himself, would not forget. The seed was there now, and eventually something would come from it.

He watched Norwood rise to his feet and half-stagger around the pilot room, checking instruments and making minor adjustments to controls. Then he heard him shout to the room in general, "Well, I'm goin' back to sleep. Next stop Hercules. See you in about three years."

Kettering was glad to see him go. Whatever the solution to this latest problem, it was his responsibility to find it; no one else's. Maybe he had better stay up a while he thought—try to work something out...

DELTA HERCULIS had two planets. One of them was obviously out of the question. It was too near the star. It had no atmosphere, and its surface temperature checked out to something more than two hundred degrees Fahrenheit. The other one was only slightly more promising. It was

about Earth-size, and not too far out to be warm, but the spectroscope showed its atmosphere to be of low oxygen content. There was nothing to be excited over, but in Kettering's opinion it definitely warranted investigation. That's why he was stunned when Norwood gave the order not to orbit.

"No use wasting the fuel," the captain explained. "Spectroscopic report is almost negative. We'd have to live in bubbles if we parked there."

Kettering began arguing with him. After all, it was the first possibility they had encountered, and neither of the authorized ships had done any better. They couldn't afford to pass it up.

Norwood remained silent, almost sullen, Kettering thought. He began to wonder if the captain would deliberately sabotage their plans just to keep them all in space. He decided that it was time for a showdown.

"I insist that we examine this planet," he said emphatically. "I feel that it's within my jurisdiction to make this type of decision. The colonists have the right to choose their new

home; that's not a function of ship's command."

NORWOOD spun around and for a moment Kettering thought he was going to lash out at him. The captain relaxed however and gave out with one of his snorts of contempt.

"What's eatin' on you, Doc? Good God, you can land on any puny little planet you want to. What's it to me? I'm not going to hang around and hoe any weeds."

Instantly Kettering regretted the tone he had used. It occurred to him that he probably appeared every bit as much on edge as the captain did. He saw now that even his worst fears had been conservative—Norwood was planning to desert them as soon as they were established in their new home—maybe sooner. This he had to prevent—almost at any cost. Troublesome or not, the officers of the *Pegasus* would be sorely missed by the colonists, especially during the first few years. The ship had fire-power with which to combat aliens if necessary. It had cruising abil-

ity for scouting territory and collecting supplies. Most important of all, perhaps, it would be their only laboratory for many years to come—the proving ground for the teaching of science and engineering to the new generations. Something would have to be done to keep Norwood and the other officers in the colony—he hoped he knew what that something was...

HE SNAPPED back to awareness when he realized that Norwood had been staring at him strangely for several seconds. Finally the captain said, "What have you been doing, Doc? You look older. You stay awake this last lap?"

Kettering shrugged with pretended innocence. "Part of the time," he replied. "I decided to coordinate all the data of our trip and write it into a book. The only way I could do it was to interview personally all the men who have been on duty throughout the flight—so I waited for their individual shifts."

Norwood stared with his mouth open. "You what? You

stayed awake for three years just to interview a few guys? Why didn't you tell 'em to make notes? No use throwing away three years of your life. You got cabins to build, and corn to plant, and kids to raise."

Kettering laughed, trying his best to make it sound light-hearted. "I know; that's why I want to get this work done now. We'll be too busy later on. I even had some volunteers from the passenger list help out with the writing of the book. As a spaceman you might find it interesting. You have no idea how many startling things have happened on this trip. Unidentified objects that have passed near us, nebulous gasses, strange magnetic fields. "

Norwood made a face. "Well, you play your game the way you like, Doc. I'll read your saga later. Let's get this goose-chase underway. You want to go, or will you take my word for what we find?"

"I'll go," Kettering said. "And I'd like to take one colonist; but there's no point in your going. We can handle the taxi."

Norwood didn't answer, but

Kettering saw that he had no intention of staying behind.

ers. But he resolved to be on guard himself.

THE ONLY colonist who was already awake, and who could be spared from the ship, was the young man who had spoken to Kettering during their first planet-sighting, back at Gamma Pegasi. Kettering asked him if he would like to volunteer and the man accepted readily.

"I'm sorry but I've forgotten your name again," Kettering told him.

"Halvorsen. Lor Halvorsen."

Kettering nodded at him, then began checking the equipment he wanted to take in the space-taxi. He saw Norwood give Halvorsen a strange look and suddenly an unwelcome thought hit him. Halvorsen was a young, good-looking specimen. Very likely his wife was a young good-looking specimen, too. Kettering wondered if Norwood was getting any ideas based on that probability. He was tempted to warn the young man to be on his guard, then decided against it. If there was one thing the colonists needed, it was confidence in their lead-

THE PEGASUS went into orbit some five hundred miles out from the planet and they studied it tele-conically for two revolutions before boarding the taxi. It was all-but-barren; Kettering had to admit that. What vegetation there was looked more like the lichen-like growths of Mars than the full oxygen-producing vegetation of Earth. But there was vegetation of some kind, and there was an atmosphere, so Kettering stuck to his decision to investigate. At least he had established the precedent of making the decisions as to which planets should be explored; he was glad of that.

Norwood handled the taxi's controls; Kettering kept busy with a camera. They landed on a hard, barren rock at least five hundred yards wide and Norwood suggested that they leave the taxi in the middle of it. That way they would be able to see any creatures that might try to approach it. Kettering agreed, then suggested in turn that Norwood stay with the taxi until he and Halvorsen had

taken a first look around.

"If it comes to any kind of emergency," he told the captain, "remember that you're more important to the colonists than we are."

He felt a little as if he were tempting fate, but he also felt that he had to find out just how matters stood with the captain.

He loaded himself down with a camera and some sample cases, and told Halvorsen to bring along the intercom and a high-powered rifle—then the two of them set out to explore the immediate area around the rock.

AS THEY neared the vegetation, Kettering found his doubts concerning Captain Norwood diminishing under the anticipation of discovery. It had been so long since he had been able to afford the luxury of concentrating on his own interest, biology, that he felt almost like a schoolboy on the first day of vacation. He regretted the extra weight of the spacesuits that he and Halvorsen were forced to wear; he would have liked nothing better than to have set out at a brisk pace and cover the miles the way he had done many

years before in the Amazon Valley of South America. He felt young enough to do it all right, but not while wearing a hundred pound space suit and carrying fifty pounds of equipment.

The growth was not exactly lichen; there were definite signs of flowering, but the reproduction process appeared to be a gradual thing, not seasonal. Kettering wished that he had checked on the planet's orbit and on the inclination of its axis. Chances were that the axis was very nearly perpendicular to the plane of revolution—then there wouldn't be much seasonal change.

The vegetation was higher and thicker than he had estimated from the taxi. As they entered it, he saw that individual shrubs came almost to his waist, and that some of the stems were thicker than his thumb.

He examined the undersides of the first leaves they came to, but found no insect life. The leaves appeared healthy, not as if they had ever been used as insect food. But they were thin, almost needle-like, and he

guessed that they might not be edible.

FOR TWO hours, he and Halvorsen strolled through the waist-high growth, squeezing leaves, pulling up roots, looking for insects, and just looking in general. They found nothing significant. No tracks that might have been made by a large animal, no sign of animal life at all—not even a bug. Kettering was about to give up and return to the taxi when Halvorsen said, "Look, there's something."

The "something" was only a hole in the ground, but as Kettering looked he saw it move. Dirt and pebbles fell into it and he thought he saw the leaves of one of the bushes disappearing into its bottom, as if pulled from below.

"There's something under there," Halvorsen exclaimed. "It just pulled a full-grown bush down through that hole."

Kettering moved forward to get a closer look. He saw the leaves of another bush begin to shudder, and soon it, too, started sinking into the ground. He turned up the volume control on his sound receiver, but all he

could hear was the sliding noise made by the stems as the bush slowly, but definitely, was drawn into the ground. There was no crunching or chewing sound, such as might have been made by a giant gopher or other type of underground animal.

Kettering motioned for Halvorsen to have his rifle ready, then he moved up to the plant and took hold of its upper branches. For a few seconds he played tug-o-war with whatever creature it was that lay beneath them. Then there was a sudden "swoosh", as if with a huge intake of breath, and the bush virtually disappeared. Kettering was left holding a few torn and crumpled leaves; the rest of the bush was underground, and the dirt and pebbles began falling into the hole it left behind.

COMMON sense told him to be careful, that this was no insignificant insect he was dealing with; but the anticipation of discovery urged him on. Eagerly, and foolishly, he realized, he began poking the legs of his camera tripod into the loose dirt where the bush had disappeared. There was an

immediate stirring of the ground all around them, as if it were honeycombed just under the surface with creatures about to break through. At the same time the "smell" buzzer in his helmet began to sound off. That meant that there was a strong animal odor in the vicinity. For the first time now he felt a twinge of anxiety. Maybe he was tackling something too big for them. Maybe they should return to the taxi for additional equipment—a couple of individual helicopter blades, for one thing, so they could continue the investigation from a few feet above ground.

He was about to suggest this to Halvorsen when, without the slightest warning, a swarm of insects swooped down all around them.

IV

INSTINCTIVELY, Kettering flicked at one of them with his gloved hand and felt a body as hard as a golf ball. He grabbed one and held it close to his faceplate, staring at it. He saw a pair of angry eyes and a set of sharp, hungry

teeth—otherwise, it was simply a hard, round body with tiny, squirming legs.

The scent receptor in his helmet was buzzing constantly now, but it was almost drowned out by the noise of the rapidly beating insects' wings. Then, over it all, he heard the scream from Halvorsen.

"Kettering! Good God look there!"

Out of the ground all around them came a mass of living, squirming snakes. At first he thought they were snakes, then he took another look. Their bodies were smooth, completely free of hair or scales. And they were huge—at least a dozen feet long and two feet thick. They were covered with a glistening sort of slime, as if they lived in an underground swamp, and on their bodies they carried thousands of the hard-shelled insects. The insects clung to the bodies of the giant worms until they were free of the ground, then they darted off to join the swarms already buzzing about the heads of the two humans.

Kettering was stunned. In a matter of seconds the innocent little planet had been trans-

formed into a hideous frightening jungle. Then, as if there wasn't action enough, from the distance came flights of birds, diving in among the insects, not trying to swallow them whole, as birds on Earth would have done, but pecking at them in mid-air, seeking their soft, unprotected areas.

NOW KETTERING understood the "economy" of the planet. The insects were parasites that lived off the flesh of the huge worms. Only when the worms came above ground did the insects break away, probably from a long-conditioned fear of their natural enemy, the birds. It was a noisy, nauseating spectacle, but was it dangerous to humans in any way? He didn't know.

The worms seemed too slow-moving to be a real threat; besides he suspected that they were herbivorous. Undoubtedly it was the worms that had eaten the plants, and—well, on Earth anyway, all large animals were herbivorous. . .

He soon saw that whatever threat might come from the worms, there was a more immediate one from the insects. The

first hint of it was when the birds began dropping like flies in a cloud of DDT. There was a change in the frequency of his "smell" buzzer and, at the same time, he noticed a dark, heavy vapor gradually settling to the ground around his feet. The insects were exuding a poison gas.

Kettering wondered if he was going mad. What a wealth of material for a biologist in the study of just these three alien life-forms—and here he was on a colonization mission.

He was about to call Norwood and report what they were seeing when he heard a new sound inside his spacesuit. At first he couldn't place it. It wasn't coming from his speaker outlet. It was a slight hissing noise, and along with it he sensed a change in the odor of the air he was breathing. It occurred to him that something might have gone wrong with his oxygen supply. He remembered checking it before leaving the taxi. . .

OUT OF THE corner of his eye he caught a movement inside his spacesuit. A pair of tiny legs were wriggling and

squirming just before his chest. Even as he watched, the angry eyes and hungry teeth of one of the insects appeared in the hole it had clawed and chewed through the tough asbestos fabric of his spacesuit. He was almost too startled to act. It wasn't possible. Not only was the spacesuit coated with asbestos, it was interwoven with tough steel thread. No insect could possibly have... Well, there was no point in pursuing that thought. An insect was definitely looking at him that very moment. In another second or two it would certainly be free inside his spacesuit and he'd have no way of combating it—after all, his hands were on the outside.

Frantically he clawed at the front of his suit. He felt a dozen of the hard bodies brush off onto the ground, but he felt other dozens still clinging to him. Dozens? It might have been hundreds. They were like a solid mass, digging in, gnawing at his spacesuit. How to find the one, out of all those, that had already penetrated?

He brushed his hands over his chest wildly, trying to knock the insects off. He called

to Halvorsen over the intercom to do the same. He heard—or thought he heard—insects falling to the ground all around him; but still, when he passed his hands over his chest and arms and legs he felt other insects clinging there.

Somehow, entirely by luck, he happened to grab the one that was struggling to squeeze in through the hole it had chewed in his spacesuit. It still had a pair of legs sticking out and he pulled on them savagely. It didn't seem possible that the skinny legs would not pull loose from the heavy body, but somehow they didn't. Slowly, and after a ferocious snapping of the sharp teeth, the insect gave way and its head disappeared from the hole in his suit. Instantly he heard the sound of his oxygen escaping and began to smell the stale, bitter odor of the alien world's atmosphere.

IT WAS NOT a poisonous atmosphere; he remembered that from the analysis made aboard the *Pegasus*; but it was unpleasant, and he could tell immediately that its oxygen content ~~was~~ low. He decided

that it was time to withdraw, at least back to the taxi.

He called to Halvorsen to let the equipment go and head for the rock where the taxi was parked. Then he saw that Halvorsen was in no position to move. He was not only battling the insects, some of which appeared to have broken in through his spacesuit, but he was being attacked by two of the giant worms. One of them had wrapped itself around his legs, while the other, as if in a coordinated operation, was concentrating on his arms and the upper part of his body. Kettering couldn't tell if they were squeezing or not; he didn't see any muscles working—just the slow, sickening squirming of the huge bodies. Already Halvorsen's spacesuit bore a coating of the filthy slime from the worms' bodies, and Kettering could hear his labored breathing over the intercom. There was no screaming, no cursing—if Halvorsen was in pain he was keeping it to himself.

FOR A LONG moment, Kettering was paralyzed with indecision. The only weapon they had was the rifle, and it was

being held tight against Halvorsen's body by one of the thick coils of worm-flesh. Anyway, the worms' bodies looked so soft Kettering was sure that a rifle bullet would simply pass right through them and probably lodge in Halvorsen's spacesuit, or in his body. Then he remembered the knife that he had brought along as a piece of standard equipment. Almost in a daze he grabbed for it, at the same time he stumbled forward to attack the two worms wrapped around Halvorsen's body.

Vaguely he was aware of a biting somewhere along one of his legs and he guessed that an insect had finally broken through and was gnawing at his flesh. He had all but forgotten Captain Norwood sitting back in the space-taxi, probably watching their struggles through powerful field glasses. Then he heard the roar of the taxi's jets and caught a glimpse of its exhaust as Norwood swung around in preparation for a take-off. At last he had learned the worst about the captain—he had been a fool to ignore his suspicions before. They were alone now—just he

and Halvorsen, on a strange planet, battling strange enemies. Well, Man had conquered the jungle before, by God he could do it again.

He began slashing blindly with the knife. All the rage of his frustration went into each tearing blow. He hated the little planet, with its filthy, squirming worms, and its blood-sucking insects. He'd kill it. Kill it all. The worms, the insects, the whole planet. He'd tear it apart with his knife and with his hands.

A GAIN AND again he slashed the sharp knife into the bodies of the two worms and finally they began to fall away. Only then did he realize that one was wrapping itself around his own legs, and others were coming at them from all directions. The insects were biting his legs and chest in a half-dozen places now, and he began to feel faint from the stale atmosphere he was breathing.

Suddenly there was a blinding flash and he felt a hundred hot pin-pricks where the insects had been biting him. He didn't know if the planet had

suddenly turned into a volcano or not; everything became unbearably hot and he felt his senses begin to leave him. The last thing he thought of was Captain Norwood sitting in the space-taxi already curving out to join the *Pegasus*, and probably making plans for running the expedition to suit himself from that point on.

KETTERING awoke to find himself on the floor of the space-taxi with Captain Norwood bending over him and applying some kind of ointment to his burns. Halvorsen, too, was lying a few feet away, his head propped on a pillow, his face wearing a rather weak grin.

"That was some experience, wasn't it, Doc?" Halvorsen said.

For a while Kettering could only stare—he couldn't even return the grin. Apparently Norwood had rescued them somehow, but he couldn't remember any part of it. He thought he remembered seeing Norwood take off in the taxi—he *must have been coming to us then*, he thought wearily.

"Hell; I think you're both

going to live," Norwood said good humoredly. "I'm sorry about those blisters on your skin. I didn't know you had holes in your spacesuits when I turned on the flame-thrower. I guess I would have done it anyway though, I didn't have time to think of anything else."

Kettering looked at the blisters on his chest and arms and decided that they were a small price to pay for getting away from the worms and insects. Now he realized that the flash of light he had seen, and the heat he had felt, had been from the flame-thrower.

"That was mighty quick thinking, Captain. We're grateful to you—very grateful," was all he could say.

A COUPLE of hours later they were back aboard the *Pegasus* and this time Kettering felt no regrets whatsoever when Norwood gave the order to blast away.

"I think I'll stay awake a little while," he told the captain. "I want to watch these blisters heal, and I want to put the finishing touches on my saga, as you call it. I won't have to interview anyone for

the last couple of chapters; I lived through them myself."

Norwood only grinned and said, "Make it good, Doc. Every nation needs its Ulysses; you might as well be ours. See you on Castor in a couple of years."

Again Kettering watched the ship's commander go off to the suspended animation chamber. This time, however, it was not with the same degree of misgiving that he had experienced before. He almost danced a jig as he left the pilot room himself, but not in the direction of the "sleep room." He went back to the special study that he had furnished in one of the partly-depleted supply rooms—back to the writing of his book, and to his special crew of volunteers. . .

SOME TWO and a half years later Dr. Kettering was still working in his study when the excited voice of the radio operator poured out of his intercom.

"Hey, everybody! Come see what I see. Castor's got quintuplets. There's six of 'em, and they all got planets. Oh, brother! Did we hit the jackpot this

time! There's a whole sky full of planets."

Kettering joined the rush toward the pilot room and looked at the viewscreen. There was no mistake. Castor was a miniature galaxy. There were three pairs of double stars, and at least four of them had long strings of planets—the last pair was too far away yet for him to be sure. Judging from their variations in brightness, he knew that they were of different sizes—that meant that some of them were certainly large enough to have atmospheres. At last—he felt it—they had found what they were looking for.

A technician was already setting up a spectroscope, getting ready to analyze the atmospheres of the planets as they came within range. Commander Durkin, the executive officer, was on duty and had already given the order to orbit. There was so much milling about and talking that Kettering didn't see when Norwood entered the room.

When he did catch sight of the captain, he was too late to notice if there had been any trace of mixed feelings on his

face. If there had been, it had been momentary. Apparently the prospect of exploring an entire system of suns and planets was all that the spaceman needed. He began snapping orders with the same efficiency that he had shown in escaping from the government patrol ships back in the solar system. He didn't fall in with the general intoxication of the others, however, Kettering noticed. He called Durkin and Kettering aside and began plotting a course that would take them closest to the maximum number of planets with the least expenditure of fuel. Only after the first positive reports came off the spectrograph did he relax. Then he reached across and shook Kettering by the hand.

"Well, Doc, you can start uncrating your picks and shovels soon now, and getting out your corn seed. We ought to find at least one good one out of all that mess."

KETTERING smiled to himself. He was imagining what Norwood's reaction would be to some of the things that he did intend to "uncrate". The

five volunteer passengers, for instance, who had helped him write the saga of the trip—and who, incidentally, had grown from little girls of twelve thirteen, and fourteen, into beautiful young ladies of seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen while doing it. Yes, that had been a good idea, writing that book. Norwood would enjoy reading it—might even enjoy reading it aloud to his children—and later on possibly to his grandchildren, somewhere down on one of those planets that was still only a blob of light.

Kettering sighed happily. It would be pleasant to get back to his own profession now, biology. Somehow he didn't feel that he was cut out to be an adventurer, or a leader of men, and certainly not a psychologist. But he had to admit that things had turned out pretty well, for all his bungling. Pretty well indeed. And now he wondered if it wouldn't be a good time to have that second shot of sixty-year-old brandy: or was it sixty-five by now? Hmmmm!



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TWIST OF THE CENTURY

by Donald Franson

A Fable of Futurity

SORTING through the junk mail one Friday afternoon, I found a letter from Ivoribean, sandwiched in among the new car deals and loan company offers. It said, *"If you want to make a trip through time to the year two thousand, come to my house Saturday morning at ten o'clock, dressed suitably."*

Now this was straight-out-of-1930 science fiction, and it intrigued me. Dressed suitably? What would be suitable wear in the year 2000? That was the first question that popped into my mind, oddly enough. *Not*, how could it be

possible to make a trip through time? For I was well acquainted with my old science instructor's flair for inventions, some of which had to be suppressed for the good of the human race.

Not that Professor Ivoribean was misanthropic—quite the contrary—he was only extremely objective. One time while dabbling in entomology, he became so interested in the struggle between insect and man that he inadvertently gave the termites in his laboratory a chemical that improved their digestion, forgetting momentarily which side he was on.



"Every year, we'd outlaw another weapon — so the ones left kept getting more primitive..."

However, this was soon remedied—out of the tent erected on the site of his laboratory came a new anti-termite spray, one that made sawdust taste like food and so unappetizing to termites.

So when Ivoribean talked about going to the future, it didn't sound so fantastic as if someone else had said it.

THE NEXT morning, I walked over to the professor's house, wearing a casual outfit of slacks and sport coat, loafer shoes, and no hat or tie, decided on as being the least conspicuous, in case we were going to stroll down the moving-sidewalks of the future metropolis. It was only a guess, of course, as Ivoribean hadn't given any suggestions as to what would be suitable.

Walking up the path, I met an old friend, Mel Ames, who had also been invited. Mel was wearing an old Marine combat uniform, complete with boots, helmet, cartridge belt, and pendant grenades. He had a pack on his back and several pieces of war surplus artillery slung over his shoulders, giv-

ing the impression of having just come in from a patrol on an old TV movie.

"I know your opinion of the future is pessimistic," I said, "but this is ridiculous."

"Civilization as we know it won't exist," replied Mel. "We'll have to rough it. These weapons aren't for war, they'll protect us against wild animals, and wilder men."

PROFESSOR IVORIBEAN met us at the door, and he was wearing a Roman toga and sandals. Apparently he had a different idea of the culture awaiting us at the turn of the century.

As we went in, I noticed against one wall of the living room, opposite the atomic piano, a complex apparatus that looked like a robot brain or thinking machine. In fact, it resembled one of Ivoribean's previous inventions.

When I mentioned this, he said, "Oh, you mean HYPOCHONDRIAC, the thinking machine that diagnosed all possible diseases from all possible complaints. This is the original machine, altered for solving scientific problems. I

sold the plans for HYPOCHONDRIAC to the medical world for one dollar. They haven't paid me yet."

"Where's this time machine?" demanded Mel.

"Now, I really haven't got the thing worked out yet," said Ivoribean apologetically. "But I had such confidence in HYPOCHONDRIAC—I guess I ought to call it ZODIAC now, because it deals with the future—that I expected it to have the time machine figured out by this morning, so I invited you over. I have a time-car built, and all that, and as soon as the brain discovers the underlying principle, it would be only a matter of minutes to apply it to gadgets I have here in my laboratory."

MEL FROWNED. "You mean to say you haven't even got a time machine yet?" he complained, lowering his Tommy-gun to the floor. "What does *this* silly thing do, anyway?" he asked angrily.

"Watch out," I warned, edging away from the machine.

"Don't worry, it can't hear you," said Professor Ivoribean. "It's nothing but an ordinary

punched-card computer, although much more intricate than most. The main improvement is that I can feed papers directly into it; I don't have to translate them into codes, or punch the cards. So if I want to add to its store of information, I insert a paper, a sheaf of papers, even a whole book, into this 'in' chute. Like so," and he stuffed a copy of *Scion, the Magazine of Abridged Science Fiction* into the chute.

"Why is there no 'out' chute?" asked Mel, forgetting his irritation in the wonder at this marvel.

"It digests them. You noticed I put in a science fiction magazine? That's only because there's a time travel story in it. I'm trying to put all possible ideas on time into the machine, and something must come of it." He jammed in a copy of a famous news magazine. "I'm getting desperate," he said. "You two don't happen to have any literature about time on you? It may need only one additional idea to turn the trick."

I REACHED in my coat pocket and brought out a couple paperback novels, which I had brought along as reading matter, in case we got stranded in time.

Ivoribean put the books into the chute. There was a shredding noise, the sound of gears grinding and cards being shuffled, and then a bell pinged. A new slot opened in the side of the machine, a blueprint flipped out and dropped into a tray, then another; soon blueprints were pouring out rapidly, not stopping until there was a large pile of them.

"Just watch," said Ivoribean, motioning us back. A conveyor picked up the tray of blueprints and transported it to another room, which we could see through the open door was a large and cluttered laboratory. Here an automatic factory sprang into life, and roared for a minute. Then another bell rang. Ivoribean dashed through the door and jumped into the completed time-car. Mel and I followed more unsurely, and climbed in beside him.

THE PROFESSOR started warming up the time machine, which made a noise like a small foreign automobile. "How does it operate? I don't know," he said. "Automation is wonderful, isn't it?"

"Just a minute," said Mel. "I read in a story once, where the scientist and his friends use an invention and then they destroy it, so the world doesn't get the benefit of it. Is this one of these cases? Why not invite the public or newsmen or someone, so we can be believed when we come back, and are not deemed mad, by those whose business it is to deem mad? Aren't most of your inventions given to the public?"

"Oh, no," said Ivoribean emphatically. "Most of the inventions *you* have heard of have been made public. But you haven't been let in on some of the things the public doesn't know about. There are some I wish *I* didn't know about." He shuddered. "Some others, seemingly innocuous, would be harmful to the world at large.

"Time travel is one of these. This is one thing I will *not*

give to mankind. It would be too disruptive. Oh, I know, you and I will have fun with time travel—learn about the different eras and so on, and come back to the present happier, sadder, but at least wiser. That's the use we would make of time travel—education.

"But not the public. They would make a big thing of it. They would run it into the ground."

HE SHOOK his head. "I don't have to tell you how—you've read enough stories. Time travel for everybody? It would be like alcoholism. People who drink to forget their troubles, sober up to find their troubles are still there waiting for them. If time travel became popular, too many people would go to the future in search of utopia, and find the future no more advanced than the present, because those who didn't go weren't interested in progress at all, so they didn't change anything.

"So here we go to 2000—I picked that year as the romantic goal of all the early twentieth century writers. Of course it will be different from all the

stories. I hope it will not be as bad as you seem to think, Mel. Did you bring a Geiger counter?"

Mel opened his pack and showed it. He also had a woodcraft handbook, and seemed annoyed when he noticed that it didn't tell how to live in the woods, but how to make shelves and bookcases.

"Never mind," said Ivorian. "I'm sure that civilization will not have fallen." He put his hand on the lever. "Are you ready?" We were, and he slowly moved the lever forward, watching the dials.

NOW THE laboratory grew dark around us, then light, then dark, flickering faster as the days flew by, and I watched the dial that looked like a revolving desk calendar, the days a blur now, the months turning over rapidly, and the years slowly changing. 1970—the building disappeared, and Mel whispered, "Atomic destruction?" But the next moment, ghosts of cars hurtled at us and through us, and we realized the building had only been removed for a freeway. Now the years rolled

faster. 1980—we watched with tension as the dial came up to 1984—then relief as it passed. 1990—Ivoribean pulled back on the lever to slow us down again, and through the flickering I saw we were on an open plain, with tall buildings in the distance—*intact* buildings, I noted with a thrill.

Ivoribean said, "We'll come back to solidity in an open spot at least—I hope it isn't a parking lot." He brought us to a stop as the dial registered December 31, 1999, and then slid over to January 1, 2000. He shut off the motor and quiet returned.

It was night, of course. We stepped out upon a hard, paved surface, like the runway of an airport. It was silent, except for a few faraway whistles blowing. The whistles stopped. *New Year's Eve*—what accuracy in those dials, I thought. There were moving lights in the sky, many lights, and I wondered if they were aircraft, or spacecraft. What if this were a landing field, and something came down? But it was lucky we *were* in an open space, and hadn't materialized inside of anything, like the vil-

lain in "Time Out for Time".

A TRAP DOOR opened in the pavement, which turned out to be a roof, and the man-who-greets-time-visitors came up. "I am the man-who-greets-time-visitors," he said. "Methinks ye are strangely dressed." he began, then scratched his head through the transparent hood he wore. His clothing was different from any of ours, though it somewhat resembled the Marine uniform without the hardware. It looked like something he could go to a Washington dinner in, or crawl through a pipe in, with equal ease.

"Come down into my house," he invited. "Your time-car will be taken to a garage. It's too dangerous to stay out here on the sidewalk. Kids with their jet roller skates—Come in, and make yourselves comfortable. I'll get refreshments—do you like hooch? Or perhaps a horn of ~~mead~~ *mead*? I don't know what era you're from."

We came down in and settled ourselves. Mel, with all his armament, looked out of place in this comfortable living

room. Even I felt self-conscious in my ordinary clothes. Professor Ivoribean, in his toga and sandals, seemed to fit in perfectly.

"Tell me," said Ivoribean when our host returned with a tray on which were cups of sack, "How did the war end, or did it ever get started? It's wonderful to see that you are at peace, but I admit my friend here is not the only one who feared atomic destruction—I worried about it myself. What happened? Or didn't it happen yet? How about Russia, China, India, Britain? Are they enemies or friends?"

THE MAN said, "Yes they are. As to your other question, we are not at peace. But we are not exactly at war either, as you think of it. We go on as always, business as usual, and don't let such things as wars interfere with our lives too much. We don't encourage them, of course, we try to stop them. But we don't try so hard that the world must come to an end as the result. We are restrained. We have rules to fight by—deplorable, it may seem to you, but a better thing

than complete destruction, since we can't have peace."

"Oh, I'm beginning to see," said Mel, looking almost disappointed. "You have outlawed atomic bombs, hydrogen and cobalt, planet smashers and universe wreckers, gas, and other things more horrible."

"More than that," said the man of 2000. "We have outlawed guns, swords, bows and arrows, any weapons at all. Perhaps by the year 2100 we will have outlawed war completely. But now it is not so bad, and another weapon is outlawed by the United Nations every year; not like in the old days when a new one was invented almost every year. Now we automatically forbid the military use of anything that's been invented since 1980, and in addition get rid of an old weapon, or method of fighting, every October 24th, United Nations Day. It's getting hard now to find something to outlaw. Last year we outlawed the flying wedge. We're probably going to outlaw either fire hoses, or fighting at night, this year. Two thousand may be the last year for potato throwing."

IVORIBEAN looked puzzled. "What did you mean when you said 'yes' to my question of whether those nations were enemies or friends?"

"They are. All the nations you named. As well as many others. I see you need orientation. I gather you're from the year 1960, or thereabouts—those are mid-century haircuts you have. Don't tell me—I don't want to know the exact date, because if I knew I would be affected by the paradox of talking to men who are existing perhaps before I was born, and my mentality would get tangled up and I would need a psychiatrist, and I can't get one reasonable these days—even Jivaro headshrinkers charge a dollar a head. But I suppose a dollar a head means nothing to you—it's a day's wages, now, for an average working man. No, we didn't have a deflation. Somebody just got the bright idea, not a new one, of calling a hundred dollars a new dollar and letting it go at that.

"Anyway, I know your general era, so I won't slip and mention something to worry you. Suppose you had come

from 1913, and I talked about World War One? Of course there is nothing like that to mention, but I might describe something minor but close to you that might spoil your fun."

THE MAN sighed. "But that's the picture—we've outlawed the worst weapons, but we still have wars. They're not fought by brawn or numbers alone, but require generalship, daring, luck, and so on. Men are killed too, sometimes, but not a fraction as many as would be if we didn't keep outlawing more weapons each year. We're waiting for the day when everyone will grow up just enough to stop fighting about every little thing. In the meantime, the people of all countries are behind this outlawing. Trouble is, they agree on little else—that's why we continue to have wars. Conferences don't seem to get anywhere. Maybe it's because wars are less frightful that they are hard to end.

"I suppose it seems inconsistent to you that some nations are both our enemies and friends. It shouldn't. Didn't you think of Germans, Italians

and Japanese, as relentless enemies at one time, staunch allies at another? Those inconsistencies were in series, not in parallel—you understand the electrical figure of speech. *Now* we have inconsistencies going on at the same time.

"For example, the war in Formosa. Oops—you haven't had it yet? That was a slip. Don't tell anyone. Oh, well, I might as well tell you everything, as long as I'm at it. Promise you won't breathe it to a soul, or a typing robot? Okay.

"THE CHINESE communists had been threatening Formosa for years, and America promised to help defend it. So when the invaders struck, in a tentative way, a sort of war started. At the same time, the U. S. didn't want to use atomic weapons against the mainland of Asia, and the first step toward outlawing was taken. (No, it wasn't the first either—it was the failure to use poison gas in World War II.) You see, it isn't any good when something is outlawed only by the recipient, or by a third party.

It's when the *possessor* doesn't use it, that it's really outlawed.

"Still, we were at war with Red China, which finally came to a declaration of war (we had to first recognize the communist government before we could declare war on it) which stands to this day."

"Which stands to this day?" interrupted Mel, clinking his grenades. "Couldn't this thing be decided in forty years?"

"No, it became a stalemate, especially when more and more weapons were outlawed. They had to be fair, you see. If we outlawed atomic artillery, they had to outlaw their bugle attacks, or human waves. Infiltration was their chief weapon, so it was quickly outlawed. The communists turned out to be semi-communists, and they had a falling-out with Russia, a few years later. A big war started in Outer Mongolia, and the local people were happy to choose sides. Any side, as long as it was a side. Simple, happy people.

"But the main result of this war was the establishment of the zealous Outlaw Department of the United Nations, which seemed to have every-

one's backing, regardless of other differences. So the race began, each nation trying to outdo one another in this piecemeal disarmament, this being the latest propaganda pitch to keep their leaders in power. And they all really did what they promised and agreed to, because wherever the U. N. couldn't watch them, their own people could.

"SO NOW WE were technically allied with Russia, because they were fighting China, and we were fighting that particular government of China, too. But soon fighting broke out in Czechoslovakia, where a semi-communist uprising had been going on against Russia, and Yugoslavia which was already semi-communist joined in. We didn't go for semi-communism, and we couldn't pronounce 'Arms for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia Committee', so we didn't get into this one. So we were neutral toward Russia in Europe, while remaining their ally in Asia.

"Then other European countries joined in the fighting, and we had treaties or

honor or something that made us go to their aid—not all-out, of course, but with actual military and manpower aid. By this time many weapons had been outlawed and war was not so bad, but we and all the others were still afraid to spread the conflict too far by connecting the various wars.

"So now we were fighting Russia, were neutral toward Russia, and were allied with Russia at the same time.

"THEN THE Arabs and Israel started fighting again, and we found ourselves helping both sides and also the United Nations troops who were trying to break it up. India wanted to promote universal peace, but was too busy fighting Pakistan. Britain was recapturing her former glory, if not her former empire, by getting involved everywhere. France and Germany went at it, just like old times, and the Germans in the French Foreign Legion distinguished themselves at foot-wrestling (by now, wars had become quite mild) with the French-Canadians who were helping Britain help Germany fight France.

"Meanwhile, back at the United Nations Building, outlawing went relentlessly on. The Scottish Highlanders were deprived of their bagpipes at a critical moment, and were only saved in the nick of time by the arrival of the U. S. Cavalry, which was composed of foot-soldiers, horses having long been outlawed for military use.

"Now a lot of these wars have simmered down since, but it's almost impossible to declare peace these days; and so legally, and in some cases actively, we are at war with almost every nation in the world. We haven't yet interfered in the war between Liberia and Libya, although coconuts have been almost exhausted, because of a newly-discovered technicality in the 118th Amendment.

"Let's see— I can quote this one verbatim: *'If belligerent nations are both under our protective treaty, and both ask for aid at the same time, and we are technically at war with all their enemies and friends, and are therefore already at war, legally, for and against them; it is at the discretion of*

the Congress whom to aid, provided, that whenever it becomes self-evident that this aid is contrary to existing aid given to any ally or enemy of the United States or any other government whomsoever, this article is inoperative.' Maybe war will be outlawed after all, by technicalities."

THE man-who-greets-time-visitors rose. "Well, it's been nice knowing you. Give my regards to George the Second, or whoever's your latest king. Oh, that's right, you're from the mid-twentieth century. I keep mixing you up with that Franklin fellow. Your time machine has been greased and serviced, so you can go now. Say, will you take this gold back and invest it in—no, I mustn't ask you to do that. I'm not telling you any secrets, so you must do nothing for me. We must be civilized about this time travel thing. I'll look you up, in some old book, some time."

"But why must we go?" protested Ivoribeian. "We've hardly begun to find out about your civilization. Do you have interplanetary travel? What

are your cars and planes and things like?"

"You won't enjoy them when they come if you find out too much about them now. Just say they are much advanced, and be satisfied with that. Would you admire a new model car if you knew exactly what the next forty models were going to be like? You'll look at your satellite rockets and say, what tiresome things they are. In 1999 they got—but I won't tell you." He led the way to the roof.

"WELL, ANYWAY, we appreciate your hospitality," said Ivoribean. "It was interesting to hear about the war situation, and how you are getting along in spite of it. I guess if you can't get rid of a thing right away, you have to learn to live with it for a while. Still, it's nice to know that war has been kept away

from America, after all." We piled into the time-car.

"Who said so? I didn't say that." The man of the future looked off toward the horizon. "Here they come."

Professor Ivoribean started the time machine, warmed it up. A mob of angry men was approaching, along the roof, some of them brandishing slapsticks and seltzer bottles.

The man of the turn of the century rolled up his sleeves. "Well, you'd better go now," he said cheerfully. "Just tell them that you saw 1999. Oh, I forgot. I meant 2000. Happy New Year."

We went back to our own time, Ivoribean destroyed the time machine, blueprints and punched cards (the last was a terrific job), and everybody went home and wrote science fiction. This is the story. Only the facts have been changed, to protect the innocent.



heap big medicine

Novelet

by Robert Silverberg

It was an ironic reversal of the usual course of things. Instead of the colonists corrupting the simple-minded natives with whiskey, the natives were undermining the colonists with their powerful hooch!

I STARED broodingly out the window of the colony administration hut and watched two of my best men come rolling home, dead drunk, by the light of the silvery moons. They were the sociologists, McGuire and Crawford, who had gone over to the Berangii village in the morning to carry out some field work.

Well, they had carried out field work, all right. They came staggering across the meadow arm in arm, bellowing raucously about a Venusian wench named Nell. Projecting from the left-hand hip pocket of Crawford's leather jerkin was the blunt, corked snout of a Berangii whiskey-flask. Both men looked as if they had really tied one on.

I was sore. I have nothing against drinking as such, even though I'm personally a teetotaler; I simply don't like the way the stuff tastes. But I *do* object to drinking when it interferes with the work of building a colony. And I also object when two staid and respectable sociologists come home yodelling barroom ditties

and waking up the entire settlement.

Springing out into the compound, I collared McGuire and Crawford and felt them go jelly-limp in my hands, as if they were happy that somebody else was assuming the burden of keeping them perpendicular. McGuire is six inches taller than I am, and Crawford five inches shorter, so the job of propping them up nearly overbalanced me, and we came within a smidgeon of tumbling to the ground.

I SHORED them up, leaned them against each other, and gave them my best top-sergeant glare. "Where have you two ninnies been?"

"In th' Berangii village," Crawford mumbled.

"Interviewing the chief," McGuire added. "Sociological data. Determining cultural matrices." At least, that's what I *think* he was saying.

I yanked the flask from Crawford's pocket, uncorked it, and took a whiff. It had the remarkable sour-milk odor of the Berangii rotgut. Ignoring Crawford's anguished moan, I

upended the flask and contributed about half a liter of native whiskey to the nutrition of the flora underfoot. I tossed the flask into a refuse-bin. I glowered at the weaving and wobbling duo of sociologists. "Fine pair of scientists you two are! Go out on a research mission, you come home tanked!"

They giggled.

"I don't see anything funny about it! It's past midnight, and you've awakened half the settlement with your damned yawping. Go along, you rum-pots! Think you can find your way to bed without help?"

Arm in arm, they staggered across the compound clearing and uncertainly threaded their way into their dormitory hut. Shaking my head, I sadly returned to my own shack. It was, I thought gloomily, a hell of a way to colonize a planet.

I PULLED out the roster sheet and put little checkmarks next to the names of McGuire and Crawford. Then I added up. Out of the hundred fifty-three members of the colony, forty were now checked off as being dangerously sus-

ceptible to the Berangii whiskey. About a dozen others, including me, were ticked off as hard-core teetotalers who weren't likely to succumb.

That left a hundred colonists still awaiting their first sip of the sauce. But it wouldn't be long before they had had their chance; the Berangii were wondrously generous with their brew.

In the old days, according to the history tapes, it worked the other way around. The white man arrived, bringing civilization and firewater, and lo, the poor sozzled Indian! But here it operated in the other direction. The natives brewed the joy-juice, and the settlers imbibed. The Berangii whiskey was a greater menace to the success of our colony than any quantity of spears or flaming torches. It threatened to paralyze our entire enterprise.

I decided to call a general meeting of the colony the next morning, before work began. The situation was getting out of hand. Before long, there might be only a handful of sober Earthmen left on Berang, with all the rest happily swilling away.

My frame of mind was anything but cheerful just then. If I had been a drinking man, I might have had a nip or two. Instead I consoled myself with a tranquilizer. My fears melted gradually away as I sank into a dreamless sleep.

CRAWFORD and McGuire both looked fine at the general meeting at 0800 the next day. They didn't even have the traces of hangovers. The Berangii firewater was heap big medicine; a few slugs provided a gloriously salubrious drunk, with none of the usual consequences the morning after. No wonder my men were taking to it so readily.

I eyed the bunch of them—a hundred fifty-two of Earth's finest, sent out here to carve a new world out of the wilderness. I said, "You know why I've called you all together this morning."

Nobody moved. I clamped hands to hips and looked them over sourly. "Last night, two more members of this outfit came home drunk. I don't need to mention any names. In the last couple of weeks, forty of you have gotten lit up on the

Berangii brew. If this keeps up, we're finished here. Finished."

I was pausing simply for dramatic effect, and I didn't expect anyone to speak out. But someone did. He was Mart Romaine, the elongated biochemist who had run the initial tests on the Berangii whiskey and pronounced it fit to drink. Romaine drawled, "You don't drink, Chief, so you don't know how tempting this stuff is. It puts you up on a cloud, and there's no hangover afterward. And the natives keep plying us with flasks of it. I think it makes them feel good to see us happy."

"Anyway," pointed out Dan Campalla, one of the construction engineers, "the Earth stuff is rationed so tight we can't get more than a couple of drops a week. Can you blame us for accepting the Berangii hand-outs?"

"We don't have any women, and we don't have any entertainment," muttered another of the construction men. "So the aliens come along and they give us free booze. Chief, we're only human!"

I FIGURED that was about enough by way of interruption. I snapped, "Sure, you're only human! And that's what the aliens are taking advantage of. Can't you goons see that they're fighting a war against us?"

"War?" grunted the medic, Dave Wesley.

"Yeah, *war*. Okay, the Berangii signed a treaty allowing us to build a colony on their planet. And yeah, they're friendly and cooperative. *Too* cooperative. Don't you see," I shouted, "that their whole idea must be to get us all so drunk we can't build the colony? It's sabotage by sociability, that's what it is! We're three days behind schedule now—and falling further behind every time somebody else decides to knock off and get tanked. Don't you think the aliens know what they're doing? They're greasing the skids for us!"

I watched their faces darken, and knew that I was rubbing them the wrong way. They *liked* the Berangii, and they especially liked the free Berangii booze. They didn't

see the big picture, the steady slackening of work in the last few weeks.

"Let me wrap this up for today," I said. "You're all grown men and I'm not going to slap any silly curfews or prohibitions on you. I'm just warning you to go easy on the joy-juice. Even if you have to hurt their feelings, learn how to say *no* when they hand you the flask. All clear? I hope so."

I POINTED to Rollins, our quartermaster. "Rolly, tonight at mess you can issue a special round of Earth liquor to anyone who's interested. At least that doesn't knock you as silly as the local stuff. But smell their breath first. Anyone who touches the Berangii booze today is counted out tonight." I took a deep breath. "Okay. Regular assignments, as before. Dismissed!"

They straggled off to their daily tasks. Only Rollins remained. The quartermaster was a short, heavy-set fellow who usually wore an amiable lopsided grin. He wasn't grinning now. "About that order, sir..."

"Special round of liquor tonight, Rolly. Wasn't that clear enough?"

"Clear enough, sir. Only—I thought you ought to know—we're running a bit low on the liquor supply, sir. I checked inventory last night. We have ten more days of Scotch, two weeks of gin, eight days of rye. Lesser supplies of other things."

I chewed my lip for a moment. "Okay, Rolly. I'll take that into consideration when ordering supplies from Earth. The arrangement for tonight still stands."

"Right, sir."

HE HEADED for the mess hall and I started my daily inspection tour. I wasn't surprised to learn that our supply of liquor was running out. Storage space is limited on a ship, and it's assumed that the members of a colonizing outfit can get along without vast supplies of hooch. If there's room after the tools go aboard, a few cases of refreshments are included in the cargo.

But something unexpected was happening here. Men who

didn't want to tangle with the potent local brew were dipping into our small stock of Earth liquor instead, as a sort of compensation. Everybody was drinking a lot more than normal, except the few total abstainers like myself. And when the Earth liquor was gone, the men who had been drinking it would turn to the Berangii brand.

I went about my rounds dolefully. As usual, there were aliens snooping on the premises—friendly little creatures, half the size of a grown man, shaped like small blue barrels with arms and legs and heads. I couldn't very well order them off the colony grounds; this was their planet, after all. But I knew that most of them had brought flasks along and were surreptitiously inviting my men to join them in a wee nip or two. I wondered how effective my early-morning pep talk was going to be.

I found out. At 1315 hours I paid a visit to the north end of the colony area, where four men under the supervision of Dan Campalla were supposed to be damming a creek. Two of

the men were flat on their backs with their legs dangling in the water; the other two were in varying states of alcoholic daze. As for Campalla, he was gamely carrying on alone, digging a channel for the dam. But he was half crooked himself, and the channel he was digging was about 110 degrees out of skew with the creekbed. Empty Berangii flasks lay scattered all around.

CAMPALLA saw me and stopped digging long enough to salute. "G'd afternoon, sir."

"What the hell's going on here, Campalla?"

"The men had some refreshment during the lunch break. They don't seem fit to work right now."

A flood of mixed obscenities and profanities bubbled up toward the front of my mouth. But before I could get them out, a native stepped out of a clump of tangled shrubbery and extended a brown earthenware flask with one of his skinny double-elbowed arms.

"Earthman boss want a drink?"

"Earthman boss no want a drink," I snapped in my pidgin-Berangii. "Thanks all the same."

The Berangii looked crestfallen. "Drink-stuff make you feel happy-happy. You like."

"I feel happy enough as it is," I muttered darkly, mostly to myself. Campalla had gone back to digging his cockeyed ditch. The alien seemed to be pouting. One of Campalla's workmen came to life long enough to grab the bottle from the Berangii. He took a deep pull and subsided again, wearing an expression of deep content.

I saw I wasn't going to get anywhere by raising a fuss right now. I walked away. The situation, I thought glumly, was getting completely out of hand.

II

THAT NIGHT, ten of the men had to be carried back to camp. A couple of dozen more were pretty wobbly on their pins. At least thirty others had been imbibing during the day, and

showed it to some degree. Close to half the camp had that inebriated glow, and only forty men were interested in the extra ration of Terran liquor that Rollins was handing out.

After mess, there was a two-hour twilight period in which Berang's big yellow sun slipped below the horizon, and the three small moons came dancing upward across the sky. Some of the men organized a baseball game, with an audience of a few dozen Berangii. Others congregated for the nightly poker game in Dormitory B. I locked myself in my office and pounded out my weekly report to Earth.

It wasn't much of a report.

I was concealing the booze problem as best as I could, but there was no disguising the fact that we were trailing schedule. The way the colonization system works: a couple of hundred skilled specialists are sent out to get a planet shaped up; once they've organized things, got the plumbing installed and the electricity working, the women are shipped out and the colony is ready to function as a self-

perpetuating, self-sufficient enterprise.

USUALLY, the celibate shaping-up period is six months; that gives us time to get things ready and under control. The idea is not to send womenfolk to an alien world until the men have dealt with any unexpected dangers that might have been overlooked by the survey-scout people.

We had been on Berang for seven weeks. Up till three weeks back, the natives had kept their distance, and work had gone along smoothly. But of late there had been plenty of fraternizing, and the results—or lack of them—were beginning to show. The lag in operational scheduling was growing from day to day. And, I figured, at this rate it wouldn't be long before we passed a point of no return, when more men were out of commission than were working. It might be years before I could send the okaying signal that would allow the women to come out here.

It might be never.

In my report to Earth, I re-

marked that socializing with the natives was impairing our efficiency somewhat. The "somewhat" made me laugh despite myself. The happy, fun-loving Berangii were quite thoroughly fouling up the works by turning my crew into hard drinkers instead of hard workers.

The survey report on Berang noted that the natives were unusually friendly. Friendly? Hell, yes! They were efficiently murdering us with hospitality!

Something had to be done. The following morning, after breakfast, I sent for Hansen, the linguistics man. He came out of his tent looking peevish and irritable. Like me, Hansen was a teetotaler.

"I'm working the Berangii verbs through the computer, Chief," he grumbled. "Did you have to interrupt me when."

"The verbs can wait," I told him. "I want you to accompany me to the Berangii village. I'm going to have to have a little talk with the native chieftain, and I need you as an interpreter."

THE BERANGII village was about ten miles from our settlement. It was a smallish agglomeration of two-story mushroom-shaped huts sprouting on both banks of a river. The Berangii don't have a very elaborate culture; they're only a few thousand years into the food-growing and tool-making era, and their folkways are accordingly simple. They were smart enough, though, to be able to think up this devilish way of driving us off their planet.

Hansen and I squatted cross-legged in front of our parked jeep while I talked, via Hansen, with the Berangii top man. The native was so old that his blue skin had taken on a coppery green tinge, and his knobby limbs were encrusted with what looked like barnacles. But his round little eyes were beady and full of life.

I said, "It isn't that we don't appreciate your friendliness. The trouble is that we can't get our colony built if my men are drunk all the time."

"It is good to drink," was the stolid reply. "Your men like it."

"I know that. I didn't say it wasn't good to drink; just that's it's bad for men who want to get a job done."

"It makes your men happy. Happy men work well."

"It makes them *too* happy," I said. "They don't work when they're too happy."

THE BERANGII chieftain smiled blandly. "We like Earthmen. We want to help them be happy."

I began to see I wasn't going to get my point across to him at all. I said deliberately, "Do you want *me* to be happy?"

"Certainly."

"Well, if you want me to be happy, stop giving my men drinks."

"But then *they* will not be happy!" the alien protested.

"That's right," I said. "They won't be happy. But *I'll* be happy."

"You are cruel," the Berangii said. "Why must you deprive your men of happiness?"

I blinked and stared helplessly at Hansen. He simply shrugged. At length I replied, "This is the way Earthmen

are. Happiness is bad for us. It—it is unhealthy to be too happy."

"How unfortunate, commented the old native. "I am not sure I believe it. But I feel greatly distressed."

HE CLAPPED his eight-fingered hands sharply together, and a younger alien came shuffling out of the clay hut, bearing one of the familiar earthenware flasks. The Berangii chieftain deftly uncorked the flask, tipped it up, and guzzled. I had already noticed that the natives reacted much less drastically to the stuff than our men did; it seemed to have no effect on their equilibrium or coordination, no matter how much they drank, but simply produced a mild relaxation. A one-liter flask, though, was sufficient to lay out the strongest Earthman, while a Berangii was still getting his whistle wet at that point. Obviously the Berangii metabolism could absorb the stuff a lot faster than ours could.

The chieftain finished his swig and grinned happily at Hansen and me. "Now you

have some." He jammed the flask practically into my nose. I shivered involuntarily—liquor of any kind has always revolted me—and turned my head away. The alien uttered a string of harsh syllables.

"What's he saying?" I asked.

Hansen smiled unhappily. "He says he pities you because you're such an unhappy man. He says he hopes you'll change your mind and have a drink with him."

I grimaced. "Thank him for me, anyway. And then start saying goodbye. We aren't making any impression on him at all, dammit. They know what they're up to, all right!"

III

MATTERS got no better in the next couple of days; in point of fact, they got a good deal worse. Despite two more stringent lectures, I failed to get the men to abstain; instead, those who had developed a craving for the Berangii whiskey—and that was almost half the outfit by now—started to

hide away caches of the stuff, and to drink on the sly. It became a common sight to see men sprawled in stupor everywhere in camp. There was no sense trying to impose discipline; I couldn't brig seventy men, and in any event no disciplinary measure short of out-of-hand execution seemed likely to get them back on the wagon.

There was no escaping the fact that men would drink. And the native brew was fearfully potent. Two good nips, and a man seemed to lose all notion of responsibility and balance. Once anyone began drinking the stuff, it was an inevitable corollary that he would go right on down to the bottom of the bottle, and from there to supinity.

It was sabotage, pure and simple. Work on the colony had slowed to the zero point. Too many key men were flat on their backs half the day, singing silly songs. The sober men didn't dare set up to work, for fear one of their lushy comrades might come rolling over and start playing with an electric torch or a welding-gun

or something else equally dangerous. By the beginning of the eighth week we had reached a complete standstill.

I had to fight back. Somehow.

I ORGANIZED a vigilante committee, consisting of the twelve confirmed teetotalers in camp plus about fifteen other men who so far had had enough will power to resist sampling the Berangii wares. We posted signs in the Berangii cuneiform script telling the aliens that the camp was temporarily closed to visitors. That kept some of them away, though there were always a few slipping in just to see if we really meant it.

We scoured the entire colony area, hunting up concealed treasure-troves of the stuff and emptying the flasks into the latrine. In the first two days of our campaign we must have found five hundred one-liter flasks. But somehow the boys who had become the most steadfast tipplers managed to remain supplied anyway. I imagine the natives were slipping them flasks behind our backs.

I sent for Dave Wesley, our head medic, who was one of the teetotalers—thank the Lord! "Dave, isn't there any kind of drug you could whip up that would give these men a distaste for alcohol? There must be something."

He shrugged. "There are half a dozen reasonably effective drugs that would do the job, Charley." He always called me Charley; we had been together a long time.

"Well," I said, "get with it, then! Cook up a batch and let's start using it."

"Don't you think I've been trying it?" he asked sadly. "I've been running tests in the infirmary all week. None of the standard antialcoholic specifics seem to work worth a damn. I filled Hinkel up with so much Soberall that his eyes bulged—and half an hour later there he was, back of the infirmary with a flask in his hand. Nothing seems to work," Wesley concluded. "Nothing."

I CALLED in Hannebrink, the assistant biochemist. Romaine, the top man in that department, was in no shape

to do any quantitative analysis right now. I had Hannebrink run some tests on the Berangii stuff, and he reported back to me an hour later that it consisted of six parts alcohol and four parts miscellaneous impurities—congeners, minerals, fusel oils. Good stiff 120-proof moonshine, in short. Wesley was stumped when he saw Hannebrink's results. All he could figure was that some alien characteristic of the impurities negated the effects of his antialcohol drugs.

Whatever the reason, there didn't seem to be any way to get the men off the sauce. By now the early succumbers were totally slaphappy, the middle batch was just reaching a state of constant irresponsibility, and the rest of us were so worried that *we* were turning to the juice just to ease our nerves. At least, some of us were. I could hardly bear the smell of the stuff, myself. But, then, I never could stand anything alcoholic.

AT THE END of the eighth week, there were only twenty-five men in camp who

could still be counted on for anything. The rest were constantly in varying states of inebriation. I was living on a diet of happy-pills myself by this time; the colony was a grand failure, and as the man in charge I accused myself of all sorts of inadequacies.

Doc Wesley tried to cheer me up. "Hell, Charley, it isn't *your* fault! There wasn't any way to stop what happened. You can't let yourself brood like this."

I scowled at him. "I'm the colony leader. The colony is not being built on schedule. The colony will *never* be built. At least, not unless we exterminate the aliens first."

"You aren't seriously thinking of. "

"Of course I'm not. But it's an idea, isn't it?" I chuckled harshly and said, "Nice, friendly natives! So anxious to keep us in good spirits!"

"That's a lousy pun," Wesley said.

"It wasn't meant as a pun." I ground my fist into my chin for a minute or so without speaking. It was broad daylight, and I should have been

hearing the sound of electronic saws whining, supersonic drills drilling, hammers hammering. Instead all I heard was the sound of snoring, and an occasional bawdy ballad sung far off-key.

"I ought to notify Earth," I said morosely. "All I have to do is send out a message telling them we're licked, and they'll pick us up and take us home. But I don't want to send that message; I don't want to admit I'm beaten. Besides, I *can't* send any messages until Sparks sobers up."

"I hate to say this," Wesley murmured, "but you *are* beaten, Charley. There *can't* ever be a Terran colony on this planet, not unless you can manage to breed a race of abstainers. Because as long as those little grinning blue devils keep brewing their stuff and handing it out on the house, no colonizing is possible here. And. "

"No!" I banged my fist down hard on the desk. "I'm not licked! Even if I have to build the damn colony all by myself, I..."

"Charley, be rational. There

isn't any solution except to pick up and go somewhere else."

I shook my head vigorously. "No, Doc. I won't give up. I've got an idea. Go find Hansen for me. I'm going to have another talk with that Berangii chieftain."

WHILE THE Doc headed for the linguistics shack to hunt up Hansen, I trotted over to the mess hall. Rollins was sprawled out snoring on the kitchen floor, and I stepped over his prostrate form and went on into the supply stores.

We still had a little Terran liquor in the cabinets. I found an empty gallon jug and washed it out. Then I unlocked the liquor cabinets and drew from our dwindling supplies a bottle of Scotch, one of bourbon, and one of gin. Coolly I poured a pint of each liquor into the gallon jug, corked it, and shook the whole mess up. Nodding in satisfaction, I locked up the liquor cabinets again and went outside, taking the gallon jug with me.

Doc Wesley was out there,

with Hansen. Hansen wasn't in very good shape.

"That's the way I found him," the Doc said apologetically. "Flat on his back in the linguistics hut, with notebooks scattered all over the place."

Hansen was reeling and writhing. His breath was foul. I said to him, "I thought you didn't drink."

"Jush had a li'l bit," he muttered thickly. "Got tired of all that thinkin' and figurin'. Bad for the brain for a man to think too much. Jush had a li'l bit to drink."

I took a deep breath and counted to two. There was no percentage in getting angry, not at this late hour. Wesley and I propped up the staggering Hansen, who protested mildly, and we dragged him along to the nearest jeep. An engineer named Marshall was asleep behind the wheel of the jeep. I lifted him out, spread him out on the ground, and got back of the wheel myself, while Wesley poured Hansen into the jeep's back seat.

I DROVE out the camp's main exit, moving slowly to

keep from running over any of the sleeping beauties snoring in the roadway. I drove rapidly down the crude unpaved road to the Berangii village. The day was slightly overcast and muggy, with dark-edged clouds looming up over the distant hills. The Berangii had said something about a rainy season approaching, and these evidently were the harbingers.

I parked in front of the chieftain's hut and the old alien came waddling out to greet us. We clambered out of the jeep and arranged ourselves in the crosslegged pow-wow posture. It wasn't easy to get Hansen arranged properly, believe me.

Poking the linguist in the ribs, I said, "Tell him we've come here to share happiness with him."

Hansen muttered something in Berangii. The chieftain caught the meaning and grinned cheerfully. He started to clap his hands to call his cupbearer, but I held up one hand to stop him, and indicated the gallon jug of scrambled spirits I had brought along.

"Tell him," I instructed

Hansen, "that we've brought our own drinkables this time. That we want him to sample *our* brew, now."

Hansen looked doubtful, but he managed to convey the concept. The chieftain nodded approvingly. I laid out four plastic cups and carefully poured from the gallon jug, taking care to give the chieftain a whopping big helping. For the sake of appearances I poured some for Wesley, Hansen, and myself as well.

WE RAISED our glasses. The smell of the stuff nearly sickened me; I touched it to my lips, let a drop or two enter my mouth, and put the glass down with most of its contents intact. Wesley, I saw, did the same thing. As for Hansen, he was too pickled to know what he was doing, so he swallowed the entire shot. He blinked and stared queerly at me, but made no comment.

I glanced at the old chief. He tipped his head back and poured the entire six-ounce glassful down his gullet like so much fruit juice.

"What *is* that stuff?" Wes-

ley asked, sotto voce, in English.

"An old recipe I learned in my youth," I replied. "Equal parts of Scotch, bourbon, and gin. Maybe it'll persuade the chief to keep his people away from us in the future."

The old Berangii put down his glass and said something.

"Translate," I commanded Hansen.

Hansen giggled. "He says it's good. He says he wants some more."

WE RODE back to camp half an hour later under a rapidly-darkening sky, feeling utterly flattened. The experiment had been a fiasco.

Wesley and I hadn't touched any of the vile mixture, and Hansen had passed out after his second round. But the old chief had been delighted with the concoction. With many chortled alien *prosits* and *skoals*, he had gulped virtually the entire gallon, and, so far as our limited Berangii vocabularies could determine, he was still hoping for more when the supply was all gone.

"I hope the old brigand has

the granddaddy of all hangovers tomorrow," I growled, clinging tight to the wheel in order to negotiate some of the road's trickier bumps.

"He won't," Wesley said. "It's something about the alien metabolism. They burn up alcohol as soon as it goes down their throats, it seems. They don't ever get very drunk, no matter how much or what gets into them."

HANSEN was snoring peacefully in the back of the jeep. The sky was almost black, now. A muggy smog had wrapped itself over the countryside, and a plague of little gnatlike insects had descended. They bit. Rain seemed imminent.

I said, "I thought perhaps our liquor would knock them out the way theirs does us, but I guess I didn't make my point. I guess there isn't any way of keeping the aliens away from us, with their damned hospitality."

"So what now?" Wesley asked. "Do we wake up Sparks and tell Earth we're throwing in the towel?"

"I don't know," I said wearily. "I wish I understood why this had to happen to me. To my colony. Everything was going along so well, and then *this* business had to start! It's enough to make a man think that. . ."

"Look out," Wesley said. "Here comes the rain."

And the rain came.

It dropped down out of the sky as if someone were emptying a bucket over us. We were drenched within seconds. It was a warm rain, and it did nothing to alleviate the general mugginess that had prevailed all day. I jammed down on the accelerator and pushed the jeep along as fast as I dared, considering the state of the road.

We arrived at camp. I saw the members of my vigilante committee running around wildly in the rain, dragging the slumbering drunks into the dormitory huts. By now, more than a hundred of my outfit didn't even have the sense to come in out of the rain, it seemed.

I parked the jeep in the middle of the compound and

jerked a thumb at Hansen. "Take him indoors," I said to Doc Wesley. "I'm going to help get the rest of these noodleheads under shelter."

IV

THE RAIN seemed to go on forever. It came pelting down out of an eternally gray sky, turning the ground to mush, rattling mad-deningly on the tin roofs of the crude huts that we were supposed to be replacing with permanent colony buildings, turning the compound into a miniature lake. It never seemed to slack up. Someone had turned on the warm-water faucet up there, and had forgotten to turn it off.

For a day or so there was no way of getting whiskey, and so some of the men sobered up a bit. They remained indoors, staring out at the rain. But on the second day a delegation of Berangii came to visit us, to find out how we were bearing up under the downpour. I asked them, by way of Hansen, how long we could expect the rain to keep up.

"Two or three triple-moons,"

was the answer. I groaned.

The moons of Berang met in conjunction every ten days. That meant we were in for twenty or thirty days of rain. Swell, I thought.

I was getting closer and closer to the moment when I would send out the pickup call to Earth, but I was too stubborn to admit I was beaten. Besides, I had some fool idea that the men would swear off the stuff voluntarily, now that they were deprived of it by the rain.

Deprived? Oh, sure. No sooner did the Berangii visitors leave than I discovered a more-than-normal gaiety among the men. The aliens had quietly distributed about fifty bottles of booze. It was the same old story all over again, that night. Finally I had to draw up a chart of patrol assignments, and Wesley, Hannebrink, and a few others, including myself, roamed the colony grounds with flashlights, finding men who had strayed out into the rain and shepherding them back to their huts.

And then, the next day, the fever began.

HANNEBRINK was the first to report it. Doc Wesley and I were sitting in the medic's office playing our umpteenth hand of gin rummy when the skinny biochemist entered. At first I thought that he had finally broken down and taken a few drinks, because he was walking unsteadily. But then I saw that his face was flushed and puffy-looking.

He said, "Doc. I don't feel so good."

And then he fell forward flat on his face.

We hauled him up on the examining table and peeled his rain-soaked clothes off him, and Wesley gave him a good look-see. He discovered a fever of 103 and still rising, along with local inflammation of the digestive tract, facial swellings, and a mild skin rash covering most of his body. We got him off to bed in the infirmary. Wesley guessed that the fever was some side effect of the muggy weather and the rain and the gnats.

Fine, I thought. Now we'll all come down with some alien kind of malaria.

"We'd better check the men," Doc suggested. "Find out if we have an epidemic on our hands."

He packed up his medical kit and we slogged across the mucky compound to the dormitories. The sound of raucous singing greeted us. We entered Dormitory A and found Crawford, McGuire, Romaine, and a couple of others waving bottles around lustily and singing space-ballads. A few of the others lay on their cots, eyes closed. The place reeked. Evidently the Berangii had paid a recent visit.

None of them seemed to have the external symptoms, but they all felt feverish. Doc did some temperature-taking and found that the boys who were asleep all had fevers ranging from 100 to a torrid 103.8.

"Maybe the rash and swellings come later," I said.

"Could be." Doc had coralled McGuire and was taking his temperature. "100.6," he reported. "On its way up. You'd better get off your feet, McGuire."

McGuire nodded drunkenly

and tottered off to a vacant cot. Doc and I exchanged frightened glances. It was an epidemic, all right. We were in trouble.

I MADE A head-count and discovered that there were just fifteen sober men in camp, including the Doc and myself. Three of the fifteen had some medical training. Doc dug out his entire supply of fever thermometers and we made the rounds, taking temperatures. The rain continued to thump down. The humidity hovered stickily at 99 or so.

The job took almost an hour, and we met later in the Doc's office to compare notes. We ran down the entire roster. There wasn't a man in the dorms whose temperature was normal. Most of them were running two or three degrees of fever.

But nobody but Hannebrink had the swellings and rash. I wondered if Hannebrink had caught something special.

"We'd better take our own temperatures," the Doc said.

We did. The results were not surprising. We all had some

fever, the Doc and myself included. Top man was Martell, the geologist, who had 101. The rest of us were still under 100, but above 98.6.

Doc Wesley squinted at Martell. "Come over here, Sam," he said to the pudgy geologist. Martell frowned and walked over, and the Doc looked closely and nodded. "Okay, Sam, get to bed. You've got it, whatever it is."

I peered and saw the beginnings of a rash on Martell's neck. His eyes looked puffy, too.

During the next four hours, the epidemic spread. Doc was trying his whole repertoire of antibiotics, but nothing was taking effect, and one by one the fifteen of us were falling victim to the thing Hannebrink had contracted. I had my hands full, trying to keep things running smoothly with the maddening rain cascading down and with a hundred fifty-odd sick men in camp.

STRANGELY, none of the drunks were developing the rash and the swellings. They all had some fever, but nothing

more. While the rest of us were catching it one at a time. After Martell it was Kennedy, and after him Michaelson. High fever, blotchy spots on the skin, facial swellings.

Doc Wesley kept me so full of drugs I felt like a pin-cushion, but I knew my turn was coming. I was developing the chills, which meant my temperature was going up.

The situation was critical. A hundred thirty men with low fever, all of them groggy from a three-week binge, and a handful of sober men coming down with some unknown alien plague. We needed help. We couldn't carry on any longer. I stared at Doc Wesley and thought I saw the telltale blotches at last popping out on his skin.

"Have to call Earth," I said. I realized vaguely that my words were coming out as an indistinct mumble. "Send for a pickup ship. This damned planet has us beat."

It was a hundred yards from the medic shack to the signal hut. I got as far as the front door of Doc Wesley's office. A sudden wave of dizziness swept over me and my feet tried to

drift to the ceiling. "Got to call Earth," I muttered, as somebody bent over me. Then everything blurred. Miles away, I heard a voice say, "Now the Chief's got it too!"

LATER, A voice said, "He's waking up," and I realized I was. I opened my eyes, after a considerable struggle; the lids seemed pasted down.

My room was crowded. Romaine was there, and Crawford, and an assistant medic named Donovan. All three looked fairly sober, which surprised me. They had been three of the heaviest drinkers in camp.

I smelled liquor fumes. There was an odd taste in my mouth. The rain was still beating drumtaps on the roof of my hut, which told me I hadn't been asleep as long as it seemed.

"How long was I out?" I asked.

"Ten days," Donovan said. "But your fever seems to be broken now. You'll be okay."

I tried to sit up, and realized I was weaker than I thought. "Where's Doc Wesley?"

"Still in sick bay," said Ro-

mayne. "He came down with the disease the day after you did. But he's responding pretty well to treatment. He'll recover."

"Treatment?" I said, bewildered. "What kind of treatment? What's been going on around here, anyway?"

"You had a rough case of Berangii dysentery, Chief," Crawford explained. "You and fourteen others."

My head was beginning to clear a little. "How about the pickup ship from Earth? When is it getting here?"

They looked blank. "What pickup ship?" Crawford asked.

I PROPPED myself up on my elbows. "The last thing I ordered before I passed out was a message to be sent to Earth. We can't stay here any more. This planet obviously isn't suitable for colonization."

"Why not?" Romaine asked innocently.

"Because," I said, "this dysentery, or whatever you called it, damn near killed us all. And there's also the matter of the native whiskey."

"Do you see anyone drunk now?" Romaine asked. "Am

I drunk? I've been drinking, but am I drunk?"

"No," I admitted grudgingly. "But. "

"And nobody died of the epidemic, either," Donovan added. "We almost lost Hannebrink, but that was only because he kept upchucking the medicine. We had the same trouble with you, Chief, for a while. But you've been taking it like a lamb for the last five days."

"What medicine?"

Donovan smiled and picked up a half-empty flask of Berangii whiskey. He held it out. "This," he said. "This is your medicine."

"This?" I repeated. "Medicine?"

Donovan nodded. "We've been working out the answer all week, ever since we sobered up. Romaine and I have just about figured it out by now."

My voice was bitter. "Suppose you let *me* in on it."

DONOVAN poured himself a goodly shot of the native whiskey before he spoke. "You see, Chief, about a day after we all started getting fever-

ish, we sobered up. That's when we found you and Doc and all the other teetotalers in sick bay, with 103 fevers and skin rashes. The rest of us, those who had been drinking the stuff, only had a light fever lasting overnight, and after that we felt fine."

"We started to work things out," Romaine said. "Hansen helped us when he told us that in the Berangii language *happy* and *healthy* are synonymous. When the aliens were telling us they wanted us to be happy, they really meant they were worried about our health."

"You mean," I said in a tight voice, "that this godawful rotgut has curative powers?"

"I'm afraid it has," Donovan said. "The way it works is this: during the rainy season on Berang, the gnats breed. The gnats carry protozoans which they transmit to other beings when they bite them. When the protozoans get into a mammalian digestive tract, they insist on being fed. And their food is largely alcohol plus the congeners of the Berangii whiskey."

"Go on," I said cavernously.

"These protozoans take up residence in your body and proceed to decompose alcohol into short-chain fatty acids with a high energy yield. The Berangii know all about this, because they have these critters living in them all the time. So they keep them fed. They gulp the whiskey down, the protozoans go to work on it, and the Berangii gain energy from the digestive process. It's really a symbiotic relationship. But when the protozoans don't get fed properly, they foul up the body's metabolism, resulting in the sort of thing you and Doc and the other non-drinkers had. The rest of us had a mild fever caused by the entry of the protozoans into our systems. Overnight they burned up our excess alcohol accumulation and we sobered up. Now, provided we keep the little beasties stoked with their favorite fuel, we don't have to worry any more."

I COUGHED. "Provided—you mean—that is, you have to keep on drinking the stuff?"

"About a liter a day," Ro-mayne said cheerfully. "But

the energy output is really tremendous. We *can't* get drunk, because our symbiotes absorb the alcohol as fast as we pour it into ourselves. We just get pleasantly un-tense. And we have so much pep that we've been at work on the colony, rain and all, and we've caught up to the schedule while you were sick."

"Tell me," I said slowly. "One last thing. Just how did you—uh—cure me?"

"By opening your mouth and pouring the stuff down your throat," Donovan said. "It was the only way. And don't think it was easy to get you to keep it down, either."

I sank back limply and closed my eyes, and listened to the rhythmic thudding of the rain.

Funny, I thought. The aliens *had* been trying to help us, after all. They hadn't wanted us to get drunk; they just wanted us to have some of their medicine handy when the rainy season began and the fever struck. It wasn't their fault that humans didn't have the proper metabolic tolerance for a drink as potent as that.

But now humans did. We could go ahead with our colony. But...

"THERE DOESN'T happen to be a cure for this protozoa thing, does there?" I asked hesitantly. I saw their faces, and I knew what the answer was. If we got rid of our symbiotes, the men would no longer have any defense against the Berangii whiskey. And next year, when the rainy season came again, the teetotalers would go through the same thing again. It was plain: no protozoa, no colony.

But the protozoa had to be kept nourished. And there was only one form of nourishment they liked.

Donovan said, "You'll just have to learn how to drink, Chief. It's the only way to survive on Berang. A dose every

four hours is the recommended prescription." He looked at his watch. "And the next dose is due right now."

I waited while the foul-smelling fluid gurgled into a glass. Reluctantly, I accepted the glass, stared bleakly into its depths, moistened my lips. Donovan, Romaine, and Crawford waited with folded hands.

Maybe the protozoa within me loved this stuff, but I doubted if I ever would. I sighed. Thirty-six years of staunch teetotaling was about to go by the board in the name of Terran colonization. I had worked too hard, to give up this colony now. Berang was my world, for better and for worse.

"Cheers," I said in a dismal voice, and raised the glass to my lips.



BUILDING NINE

by J. Martin

Graetz

Suddenly, young Miller found himself wandering down halls that did not exist, in a building that wasn't there!

NATURALLY, Ford Miller was lost. Because he was a two-weeks freshman, because he was in a very particular hurry, but most of all because he was well into the maze of corridors that is The Institute's main building, he was lost. The Rogers Building is a monstrous, crab-shaped edifice, more than a quarter-mile through the halls from claw-tip to claw-tip. It is neatly chopped off into imaginary numbered sections ("buildings") which differ from each other only the age of the paint on the walls. It takes months of acquaintance to gain familiarity, so the result of Ford Miller's desperate search for a men's room was to turn the unguarded Administration of the Institute of Technology on its collective ear.

Damn! thought Ford furiously. The whole length of Building Six and not even a faucet in sight!

But as Ford sped by Lecture Hall 6-120, he caught a glimpse of the building's exit onto the East Campus, where he lived. His overwhelming thought as he veered off to the right was,

"If I can just hold out till I get to the dorm..."

...no dice. He was still in the Institute's main building. Ford was pretty badly off by this time, so he scarcely noticed the titles on the doors as he ran down this new corridor that shouldn't have been, but was.

9-103

Pyrology Spell Research

Prof. Culp

D. A. Appling

— —

9-112

Senior Necromancy Laboratory

— —

9-121

Sealed Bottle Supply Room

(Keep Door Closed)

— —

9-126

MEN

The letters leaped out at him, grabbed him by the throat, and smacked him in the eye. Ford dived for the door.

WHEN FORD plunged across the unique threshold into Building Nine, he had forced a discriminator to jam; this tripped a relay, which op-

erated a solenoid that closed a microswitch, which set a buzzer to sawing away in room 9-102, Headquarters, Undergraduate Alchemy Laboratory (Prof. Ashton. Enter Room 9-105). At the time, Professor Ashton was lecturing juniors in Building Two. His secretary had just entered the file room to check on a student's records, and she did not hear the signal for thirty-five seconds. Twenty-seven seconds after the buzzer began sounding off, Ford Miller had found the room of his choice, so the secretary saw no one when she perfunctorily glanced into the corridor before resetting the relay and shutting off the buzzer. Since no one who was not aware of Building Nine's existence could actually enter it, the system's only purpose was to prevent such persons from getting stuck in the interphase between the building and the rest of the Institute.

But Ford Miller's singular, overpowering thought jammed the discriminator.

HIS MISSION accomplished, Ford was no longer in a hurry. He ambled down

the corridor of Building Nine, studying the door captions like any freshman. He suffered several rapid-fire shocks. When his brain cleared, the True Scientist in him manifested itself. He began to recite:

"It is intuitively obvious" (a phrase he had learned at his first Physics lecture) "that Tech has set up a research laboratory and several courses to investigate the medieval theories of Alchemy. This is perfectly legitimate work and may very well lead to significant discoveries in modern chemistry. I'll have to see about electives here." And Ford Miller wandered back into the conservative continuum of Building Six. He turned to re-enter the Alchemy labs and found himself strolling out into the rare bright sunshine of the East Campus Quad. The True Scientist was stunned into catatonia, and the purely human Ford Miller ran all the way to his dormitory room and locked the door.

DAN "BUCK" ROGERS, president of the IT Science Fiction Society banged his fist on the table. "All right, you

guys, the meeting will please come the hell to order!" The members subsided, and the term's first meeting was on its way. In fifteen minutes, the business was disposed of, and the eighth motion for adjournment proved successful. As the general discussion started up, Ford Miller, eager to make a good first impression, began to tell the Society about his unsettling experiences at the threshold of Building Nine. As he neared the end of his tale, a gaunt, mustached figure, his trousers pegged tight with bicycle clips, strode into the room. A mock groan went up from several members as he turned to face Ford and enunciated in his clipped, not-quite-British style, "You are obviously demented from the unseasonable heat. There is no such place as Building Nine."

Ford stared. The tall man continued, "My name is C. Robert Keppel, or Crober T., as you wish. I am the Lord High Impotentate of the Science-Fiction Society." You could hear the hyphen. The new arrival seemed to melt onto the floor, head resting finally on the limp musette bag he car-

ried with him. He all but disappeared under the table.

"However," said the floor, "Continue with your narrative. I shall be delighted to hear the end, at which time I will pass judgement upon its merits as a story."

The Society could hardly contain itself, but Ford was so confused that he was silent the rest of the evening. The other members, though, were fascinated with the possibilities of the situation, and they were soon caught up in a loud and wordy free-for-all. None of them noticed a member who had remained silent the whole time, puffing, at first nervously, then speculatively, on an oversize bulldog pipe.

AFTER THE meeting, Harold Copley, the pipe-puffer, drew Ford Miller aside, out of earshot of the rest.

"Do you know what you've done?" he asked Ford sternly. "You have nearly broken the Institute's most closely-held secret of the last fifty years!"

Ford blinked. Finally he summoned enough college-bred *savoir-faire* to mumble, "Huh?"

"This business about Building Nine," said Copley.

"There's more in it than either you or the rest of the Society knows. Didn't you watch the others when you started to talk? As far as they're concerned, there just isn't any such place as you described, and they were ready to turn you out on your fanny until Keppel walked in."

"I still don't follow you," Ford said. "Is there or isn't there a building where I thought it was? Or did I imagine the whole thing?"

"Yes and no to the first question," Copley answered him, "and though it stretches my credibilities, no to the second. In fact, the most surprising thing is that I'm able to talk to you about it at all."

"Look, I want to explain this in detail. Can you come to my room in the Graduate House tomorrow afternoon? It's Saturday, so you shouldn't have any classes after twelve."

"Uh-yeah," Ford said uncertainly, "I guess I'd better. I'm all fouled up now. I'll come around."

THE GRADUATE HOUSE is unique on the Tech campus. Like none of the other living groups, it exudes an ivied permanence from its vaulted lobby, through the long, dim, carpeted halls, to the heavy, oak-paneled doors that should open into quarters which reflect a hushed, restrained mode of living. This effect is soon dispelled upon entering the cluttered studies of most graduate students, but it is only intensified in the rooms of Harold Copley. Everything bespeaks a quiet assumption of post-graduate superiority, not crudely flaunted, nor yet idly tossed off with an affectation of *noblesse oblige*. It is just right in the scheme of things...

...as was the intermittent smoke signal that rose from the overstuffed chair in the corner, facing the door. When Ford Miller looked again, he separated Copley from the rest of the decor, and managed to mutter nervously, "Uh, hello!"

"Ah, Mr. Miller!" Copley greeted him with a precise measure of heartiness that revealed, somehow, a true warmth and friendship. "Come in, close the door, and sit down. There's

Lisbon on the table if you're thirsty."

"Thanks, Mr. Copley." Ford, now infused with confidence at having been accepted, sat down by the window.

"It's Mr. Copley only to my students. To members of the Society and people, it's Harold. Really, Graduates *are* human—in some respects. Now, about this Building Nine matter," Copley's voice became serious, "It's something you are involved in much more than you probably realize. I was on the phone a good part of last evening and this morning, just to decide what to tell you and how much. Uh-oh, you're getting that glazed look again; I'll have to fill you in. Won't take long.

"LOOK—I. T. has been the world's most highly-regarded school of engineering and science for nearly a century. But back before 1916, when the present buildings were constructed, we had a devil of a time getting the really top researchers from Europe and the Far East to come over here. Reason: No magical research."

It would only be approx-

imately accurate, to say that Ford goggled.

"I mean it. For hundreds of years, apparently, the best universities in the Old World had conducted rigorous work in the fields of Magic and what we now call Alchemy, though that isn't quite the same as what it used to be. At any rate, around 1910, when the plans for the new campus were being discussed, the most influential of these scientists who had been persuaded to come to Tech insisted that a School of Magical Sciences be incorporated into the plans. Understand that this was back at a time of intense skepticism, so it is no surprise that the Administration was shaken.

"But the European group were well acquainted with the problem, since the 'black arts' had always been a matter of suspicion and superstition over there. These men showed in detail how to set up the interphase co-ordinate system which would enable the Research section of the School to be built. The upshot was that the Administration agreed, and what is now known as Course XI was created. They didn't ne-

glect expansion, of course, and if you will notice the next time you study a map of the campus, there is no building whose number ends in nine."

"Guh!" said Ford.

HAROLD COPLEY grinned.

"Precisely. Now, about theory. It depends on the existence of what might be called a serial universe, though I doubt that's very accurate. The effects of what we call 'magic' here are based on the application of interphase mechanics, which allows one to utilize the natural laws from some other phase, or continuum, or whatever you like to call it, in this one. The Ninth Level buildings, as we call them, are in one of these other phases. The connection is made simultaneous with an actual exit in Building Six, so that when one of us walks out the door, no one really notices if we don't come out the other side. People are not terribly observant. Oh, yes, I suppose I should mention that I'm a Graduate Fellow in Alchemic Engineering. My lab is in Building 19, which stands in a spot corresponding to the Hyden Library on the main

campus. We get in through the back door to the Science Library, which everyone thinks is locked."

"But—but—but," protested Ford, "How do you get into the place, and worse, how did I?"

"I'm not too sure how *you* did it," said Harold, "but the method we use is quite simple. As might be expected, some of the laws we can apply involve mental abilities. And don't you dare say *psi*! The term is out of favor. Anyway, since the energy levels between phases are tremendous, we can't maintain a permanent connection, so we use a feedback system that runs a make-and-break threshold. If someone knows that Building Nine is there, and wants to enter it, a discriminator picks up the thought and closes a relay which holds the interphase steady long enough to let him pass through it. If anyone else goes out the door on the main campus and happens to brush the threshold on one of its 'make' cycles, the discriminator trips an alarm. The cycle is short enough so that the person will usually pass out the main door with no

trouble, but there is a very remote possibility of getting stuck, so Prof—uh, a certain professor's secretary peeks out the door before she shuts off the buzzer. It's not too rigorous a job, so I guess your hurry to get to a john got you past her.

"ONE LAST item. Every person working in Magic has a selective geas—it's really a form of psychological block—on him that prevents his talking with an outsider. Apparently, since you got past the interphase, you're a special case, which is why I'm able to tell you all this."

"All this" had left Ford visibly shaken. But the True Scientist rallied. "I still don't see your point in telling me anything. I'd think it would be much easier to let me forget it."

Copley was disappointed. "You mean after what I just said, you still can't figure it out? I thought you were an Engineer!"

Ford's mind was jolted into operation, mostly by his concern over having fallen from grace. Finally he said, "I'm the

only one you can talk to who isn't in Course XI, right? Obviously, then, you think maybe I can talk to others, where you people can't. Does that mean you want the rest of the Institute to know?"

"Hmmm. You do have promise, after all." Copley's voice was quiet again. Ford brightened. Copley continued, "The corresponding schools in Europe have been on an equal footing with their parent universities for twenty-five years. Only in America, at Tech, are we still forced to keep it a secret. Until you happened, we had no way of exposing the place. Most of us in Alchemy are tired of living half a lie, so to speak, since we have to carry on a certain amount of 'ordinary' research to justify our fellowships. Much more real work could be done if we could devote full time to Magic. As it stands, everyone but a few ancient Emeriti has done a little. ah unsponsored research to figure out some way of getting around the geas.

"Besides, if the Institute were to openly admit the existence of Course XI, other centers in the country would

set up their own Schools. Face it, I. T. is a pretty fine place, and what it does is certain to influence the operations of other colleges."

"So you want me to spread the news?" asked Ford.

"No. I have a better idea. At the next meeting of the SFS..."

PRESIDENT ROGERS recognized Ford Miller at the beginning of New Business.

"Buck," he began, "remember last week when I was talking about Building Nine? Well, I found out that the place really does exist."

"Oh, lay off it, Ford," someone said. "After all, we aren't cultists—we just like to read the stuff."

"No, I mean it," insisted Ford. "Harold Copley gave me the whole story. He's a student there in Alchemic Engineering. He can't tell you about it, but I think he can say whether or not I'm telling the truth."

Eyes turned toward the Society's ex-Vice-President. The pipe stopped puffing just long enough to allow, "He speaks the truth," to escape.

If ever there was an incredu-

lous murmur, the ensuing one was it. From the geographic center of the conversational undercurrent, the commanding voice of the floor spoke precisely.

"Let us hear him to his point," Crober T. Keppel said. "The matter is well worth discussion by this Society."

"This Society" subsided. Ford told them all that Harold Copley had explained to him, and finished by describing the geas.

Some one said, "Hold on here. Why can't these folks just write out what they want and toss leaflets around?"

FORD ANSWERED him. "The geas prevents their writing anything concerning the field when they're outside—here. This also means they have to do all their research in the other phase. And something in the geas overrides any thoughts about printing up exposes while they are in the School of Magic and then bringing them here. Harold says that every new student tries it, but it never works."

The member persisted. "So how did you get through?"

Ford blushed. "Harold found that out yesterday," he answered. "It seems that since I had such a powerful thought, about having to find a head and all, that I flooded the discriminator. You know how sometimes when a person lives near a radio transmitter, the signal will blanket the band, and his radio will get nothing but that station and its harmonics. I did the same thing on the level of thought. The discriminator got confused, and jammed. It held the threshold steady and set off the alarm all at once."

Rogers asked Ford, "Granted, as you say, that the people in Course XI want to let everyone else in on the secret—where do we come in. As the Society, I mean."

"I can get all the information from Harold," said Ford, "and pass it on to you. Then we can all start dropping hints all over."

"Ha! An excellent idea!" The top half of Keppel appeared from under the table. "Whether the labs exist—and since my estimation of Mr. Copley is of the highest I am inclined to believe that they do

—there is much to be said for such a plan, if only for the entertainment value. It would be extreme folly to let opportunity for at least a masterful joke slip away.”

Ford was so pleased with this favorable reception that it wasn't until minutes later he realized that the whole of Keppel's little speech had been a single sentence.

MILLER outlined Harold Copley's proposal. “From now on, each of us—and as many others as he can convince—should drop mentions of Building Nine activities in quizzes, lab reports, problem sheets, and other work that's turned in to staff and faculty. Some of it is bound to reach strategic professors, since they all have to do some conventional work to keep up appearances. Enough of these hints, and they'll start comparing notes. Harold has already told me where the various course offices and laboratories are in the Ninth Level, and I've printed up some floor plans and a poop sheet of facts about the place.” He passed them around.

“You know,” said Crober T.

Keppel. “This is detailed enough to be credible. I should like to go on record as being in favor of a motion to put these proposals into effect.”

“I so move!” This from Jim Gilbreth.

“Second!” Don Waters.

“Call for the vote!” Ford Miller, immediately.

“All in favor!” shouted Buck Rogers. A chorus of ayes.

“Opposed!” Silence.

—1—

INSTRUCTOR Hines glared at the paper before him. In answer to the third quiz problem, Don Waters had written, “This problem took seven separate steps. If one were able to use a method recently worked out in Magical Calculus by the Ninth Level people, it could be done in three.”

Hines grunted. “Joker, eh? Ten points off for being funny!”

—2—

Research Assistant Wickman was wearily reading Jim Gilbreth's lab report. The student was off on another of his

tirades against the poor quality of lab equipment. "However," the paper read, "if one were to set this experiment up in line with Alchemic principles, the new Seeder and Kohlbruth spirit balances recently purchased by the Necro lab could be used to decided advantage. Our aged triple-beams just are not precise enough for the requirements." and on and on and

"My God, how did *he* know we just replaced our balances?"

—3—

Professor Werthman stiffened. On the paper he was holding, Jim Richardson had solved a field theory problem using Simpson's Pentagram Series, a direct development of the Solomon's Seal Equations discovered by the Leipzig School of Magical Arts over three hundred years ago.

LATER, Professor Werthman insisted to his colleagues in the Common Room, "He just can't know. The geas is positively secure. It's been tested and re-tested. The whole thing

is a vicious, coincidental joke!"

"I wonder, Carl," Dr. Gilman of Communications turned to answer. "Professor Anders told me today that one of his lab assistants, who also does Necro research in Alchemic Engineering, received a lab report in his Instrumental Analysis course which contained a reference to his magic specialty. One or two others have also noticed a few hints. It should be investigated, at any rate, just in case there has been some circumvention of the geas. You know how the students and younger faculty feel about the secrecy; someone may have come up with something."

"Nonsense!" snorted Professor Werthman. "The geas is cross-blocked. It's absolutely foolproof!"

The flood of hints at the existence of the Ninth Level phase of the campus increased. Every day, each department of the Institute's conventional curriculum received papers, reports, and homework that dropped references to Magic and Alchemy as she is taught at I. T. Instructors who, themselves, knew nothing of the interphase passed it off as a

typical Tech prank. But those on the faculty and teaching staff of Course XI, Magic and Interphase Mechanics, and Course XI-A, Alchemy and Alchemical Engineering, were frantically comparing notes, drawing correlations, assessing data, and gradually coming to realize that what had been just an awful suspicion was an established fact. Final, crushing, irrefutable proof came on the day they fed the data into the metallic maw of WHIRLWIND, the Omniscient (for \$5 per minute) Digital Computer.

Paraphrased, what WHIRLWIND said was, "You guys have had it. Somebody has beat the hex and is hipped to jaw with cats and squares alike. The Outs and the Ins are now in the same pad, boys. That'll be \$335, please."

THE ADMINISTRATION and the Faculty of Course XI held a closed meeting. Professor Anders presided, and Dr. Gilman of Communications presented the situation.

"Gentlemen," he reported, "as of this morning, the Instructors and Professors who double in Magic, so to speak,

have received 973 references, hints, and even outright accusations regarding the secrecy of the Ninth Level in the papers of 613 students. No doubt these figures could be increased fourfold if there were a way to investigate the files of the rest of the teaching staff. As it is, we have been hard put to keep our concern hidden from the others. The strain is telling, I assure you.

"Fortunately, it appears that most of these students are treating the matter as a joke. Still, a significant number of cases seem to be serious. They are our main worry. Yes, Arthur?"

Dr. Culp had signaled a question. "I understand," he said, "that there is a nucleus in this latter group. Have you discovered what it is?"

Dr. Gilman answered, "Yes, we have—I was just going to mention that. The very first references that came to our attention, and also those which have been more specific and pointed of late are the work of about twelve students, all of whom have one very interesting thing in common.

"They are all members of the

I. T. Science Fiction Society."

Professor Ashton looked up. "I suppose we should have known. Harold Copley is a member of that organization."

"Quite right," Dr. Gilman assented. "Much of the specific information on Course XI-A which is in the hands of these students is related to Mr. Copley's line of research. It is evident that whoever crossed the interphase is also a member of the SFS."

PROFESSOR WERTHMAN emerged from behind his cigar. "Hmph! You say there are only twelve persons in this nucleus. Why not have them all brought over into the Ninth Level, put under a geas, and be done with the whole matter. Lacking a driving point, the joke would lose its currency, and Mr. Copley will have lost his contact."

"If it were that simple, Carl," returned Dr. Gilman, "we wouldn't have needed this meeting. But the problem has gotten out of hand. There are too many of our own students involved now. If we were to suddenly cut off their channel to the Main Phase, here, we would

still have the aroused complaint of their forced silence about the interphase itself. Techmen being what they are, it wouldn't be long before they discovered a way to get someone else past the discriminator. We still aren't exactly sure how it was done the first time—but if it was done once, it can be done again. Consequently, the Administration has asked me to present two alternative approaches.

"1. That the members of the Science Fiction Society be taken into the lab and given a selective geas which would block their memories of this episode. It is a touchy thing to do at best, as you all know.

"2. That the Institute finally come into the open and reveal the existence of Course XI and the Ninth Level."

A FIST POUNDED for order above the noise "Gentlemen. *Gentlemen!* DAMMIT, GENTLEMEN!" Professor Anders finally calmed the meeting down. Then he called on Holden G. Frederick, Associate Dean of Students and Dean of the School of Interphase Sciences, to speak for the

Administration.

"There are several points in favor of the second solution," Dean Frederick said, "and I, for one, would like to see it accepted. The necessity for secrecy was imposed by conditions current nearly fifty years ago, when the new campus was built. The Administration is of the opinion that public thought nowadays is sufficiently receptive to the unusual in science that we can safely take the wraps off our work. I. T. is so well established that there would be no question of embarrassment. On the contrary, there are interested persons who would be quite pleased to see the Institute conducting serious research in these fields. It is certain that we have nothing to lose, and most likely some brilliant workers to gain."

In a short time, the meeting voted to allow the second solution to be implemented.

"Hblrglhh!" growled Professor Werthman, and went back into seclusion behind his cigar.

HAROLD COPLEY had just finished reading a letter from Dr. Gilman of Communications to the SFS.

"We were most successful," he was telling the members, "and it was much easier than I expected. Apparently the faculty was sitting on edge as it was, and all we had to do was push them off. It's a lot like leaning against a solid wall, only to have it give way just as you put your full weight on it. Anyway, the whole story will be printed in *The Tech* and published as a Special Report to the I. T. Fam— Oh my Lord!"

The Society stared aghast as the usually dour Harold Copley rolled on the floor in a fit of uncontrolled laughter, his pipe forgotten. Crober T. Kepel was the first to overcome shock. "His mind has snapped from the sudden release of strain," he decided aloud.

"Nh-nh-no!" gasped Harold Copley, now sitting up, but still shaking with mirth, tears streaming down his face. "I j-just happened to think what the Institute is up against-t-th-ha-ha..." He struggled for control. "Ha-ho-how can the Administration reveal to millions of people that their biggest secret had to be disclosed because a freshman had to go to the john!"

ALIEN CORNUCOPIA

A Vignette by Walt Liebscher

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~~~~~  
~~~~~

**W**HEN THE first flying saucer actually landed, it was everything Earthmen believed it would be. Also, as expected, the alien was invulnerable, and indescribably horrible. In fact, the thing was so monstrous it took an Earthman with a great deal of intestinal fortitude to even look at it.

But, not so with the distaff side; definitely not so. Instead, they went completely off their rockers. To a woman, they all proclaimed the alien was the ultimate cotton pickin', living end; describing it in various bilious terms such as cute, cuddly, terribly sweet, and ever-lovin' squidgem wudgems, whatever that is.

Even after it was ascertained that Splend—that's what it called itself—was on a foraging expedition, the women continued to idolize the many-tentacled nightmare. And, it was quite a blow to manhood when Belinda Bjornstorm, that one-woman Mafia of the bawdy house circuit, quit her highly lucrative business and promptly took on the position as Splend's Supreme High Priestess of Artistic Diversion. I'm sure you all know what that is.

Well, it wasn't long before we men discovered the object of Splend's foraging. Women! What else?

**I** KNOW SOME of you wise guys are going to say there was noth-

ing wrong with letting it have a few women, more or less, since they obviously wanted to go. But having a few women, more or less, is not the question. Who wouldn't? Instead Splend wanted hundreds of thousands, more or less. As I explained before, it had many tentacles.

What could we do? We were helpless. Each and every woman insisted on accompanying Splend back to the planet of Deldirbnu No.ssap.

At first we were adamant. In the end we relented. Why? Because the women put on the biggest damn production of *Lysistrata* since the invention of the apple.

So we had a national lottery. The winners, one of every 20 women, were free to flee with Splend.

My wife was one of the lucky ones. To the last, even up to the boarding ramp, I pleaded mercy; I even consented to give up Mah Jong. But, she only had eyes for that horrible creature.

As she started to leave me I made one last desperate plea. "But dear," I said, "it has so many others. You'll just be one of thousands. Think of me."

"I am," she said. Then, for some strange reason, she added "Ugh!"

Somewhere in the vastness of outer space, there dwells an alien with a large penchant for Earthwomen. I hope my wife is happy. After all, I can't help thinking.

Splend is a many loved thing.



# THE LAST WORD



## The Reckoning

**A** BERTRAM CHANDLER'S "Dreamboat" took first place in your affections, in our February issue, with part two of the serial in the place position. But "Caduceus Wild" came out to lead again in our March issue, tying with Kate Wilhelm's "Project Starlight"; Kate's story is listed first, since she got more "outstanding" designations than did Moore & Bradford (for this installment). On the other hand, a number of voters who put "Project Starlight" in the "l" or "o" categories withheld voting on the serial—which might mean that they were saving the parts up in order to read it all at once.

The February cover, showing that raft in space, was definitely liked by the majority, though a few thought it a bit too outrageous. What many of you want to know, though, is the report on the March cover—the first using the new style. The returns have been nearly two to one in favor, so you may be seeing more of this type—though, as the present cover indicates, we haven't stopped experimenting. Nor should you think that we have not entirely abandoned the idea of using a color painting once in a while; we need a great many more ballots, as well as to see how the general public liked it, as shown by sales figures, before we make a firm policy decision on whether or not to adhere to one type of cover exclusively.

So let me urge those of you who have not spoken your piece to write in. Here, now are the breakdowns for February and March.

### For the February issue:

|                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Dreamboat (Chandler)             | 1.66 |
| 2. Caduceus Wild (Moore & Bradford) | 2.37 |
| 3. Last Unicorn (Hoch)              | 2.55 |
| 4. Delivery Guaranteed (Kox)        | 2.66 |
| 5. Paradox Lost (G. H. Smith)       | 3.77 |

### For the March issue:

|                                                                              |      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Project Starlight (Wilhelm) tied with<br>Caduceus Wild (Moore & Bradford) | 1.36 |
| 2. Smoke of Last Rites (Maki)                                                | 2.27 |
| 3. Spaceman's Delight (Chandler)                                             | 2.35 |
| 4. Time Bomb (Farrell)                                                       | 2.55 |

## JOHNSON TO EVERYBODY

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This is the letter I promised you about the fanzine clearing house. The idea of a fanzine clearing house is one that I have been thinking of and kicking around with my correspondents for many years. The idea being that there are literally hundreds of fanzine editors with circulations of from 15 to 20 readers up to the 100s. And there is no estimate of how many silent fans there are—*i.e.* people who have been avid readers of science fiction and fantasy for years, but who have never written letters to the editor, or contacted any science fiction fan groups, or attended conventions. A large percentage of these people would like to know about fanzines, fan clubs, fan activities, especially in their own areas.

So the National Fantasy Fan Federation has decided to set up a fanzine clearing house as a service to all faneds, whether they are affiliated with National Fantasy Fan Federation or not, and to all organization zines. This fan-

zine clearing house will accept bundles of fan mags and official Organs from the faneds and organizations of fans of science fiction and or fantasy. These zines will be offered to the public in bundles.

In other words a reader may send in 50c or \$1.00, or however much he feels like splurging at the moment. In return he receives a bundle of fanzines as representative of his particular interests as possible. Thus, a flying saucer fan in New York would receive any fanzines available from the Metropolitan area, plus fanzines dealing in Flying Saucers of UFOs, plus some fanzines of national scope. Thus giving the fan an idea of what activity is going on around his own neighborhood, in his own pet sphere of interest. Then of course the Official Organs of both the National Fantasy Fan Federation and the International Science Fiction Correspondence Clubs.

This should result in quite a few recruits for the fan organizations, and some subscribers for the contributing faneds. Since the project is to be non profit altogether, the cash

received will be divided among the contributing faneds on basis of number of pages contributed. The only expense to be deducted will be the postage for mailing the bundles.

All fan organizations are invited to send their Official Organs, and these will be included in all outgoing bundles for national organizations, and in all bundles going to fans in their geographic area for local organizations. In any case a mimeod or hectoed list of all people sending for said bundles, or even those inquiring about them will be sent to all organizations and faneds concerned in the project.

All faneds are also invited to participate. No one is barred from participation. Everyone is welcome.

Inquiries and bundles and cash should be sent to Seth A. Johnson.

*SETH A. JOHNSON, 339 Stiles Street, Vaux Hall, New Jersey*

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COMMITTEE*

*Fred Prophet & Roger  
Sims, Co-chairmen*



## Editorial

# Something Happens . . .

had medical experts stalled. Huh?

A science fiction editor, who has been devoting spare time to investigating such reports and such devices and such experiments, writes an editorial saying, "*We Must Study Psi*". Hmmmm.

And all over the world, various people report that they have constructed this or that "psionic machine" and that *it works!* Well . . .

A new phenomenona? Hardly. Twentieth Century superstition? Sounds like it.

There have been similar reports, not too dissimilar experiments, and even more strange occurrences throughout recorded history. We weren't there; most of you who read this weren't there; if we had been, we might have thought that something did happen. If we

**A** PHOTOGRAPH is "treated" in a certain manner, and Japanese beetles die in the area represented by the photograph . . . A "dingus" is constructed by means of which investigators locate water pipes or power lines easily—lines which otherwise would take indefinite search . . . A box with wires and a battery is rigged up and someone miles away, who hasn't even heard of the attempt being made, starts to recover from an ailment which

observed it before we were told that the "scientific method" alone can accomplish or explain anything that happens, we might have believed what we saw or heard or heard about. If it had happened through something we were experimenting with ourselves, an effect we were trying to produce through highly unorthodox procedure, we might have become convinced that "it works".

**A**ND WE COULD be wrong on all counts; any historian knows that testimony is unreliable in the individual instance. Any soldier reading an account of a battle in which he took part is likely to feel that the writer has got something all wrong; two soldiers in the same fracas can come up with absolutely contradictory reports, each honestly describing what he is sure he saw. Both can be wrong in one sense, both right in another.

Yet, we have to rely upon the unreliable in order to get any estimate at all about what has happened anywhere, at any time. Photographs help, but they can't be trusted for inter-

pretation; recordings of conversation help, but we didn't see the expression on John Doe's face when he said that. Talking pictures, tv broadcasts help—but we don't know what happened to the record itself between the time it was made and the time we saw it on our screens.

(Mikoyan says something to a reporter which reads like a jibe, perhaps even a nasty crack, when printed in the papers. Those who saw and heard him on tv know that he smiled warmly at the time. But then—we heard the translator put the question to him in a language that most of us do not understand and heard him reply in a similar gabble of incomprehensibility. Was what the interpreter said to our guest in Russian an *exact equivalent* of what we heard the reporter say to the interpreter? And vice versa. We don't know—unless we know Russian as fluently as the two who were speaking it at that moment.)

**A** MAN MAKES a watch, telling us just what the various parts are supposed to

do. We can understand the principles; we can open it up and see the wheels go around. We can wind up the watch and say very definitely whether "it works" or not. "It" is a tangible object; its "workings" we can describe in all essential detail; and this "working" we translate into useful symbols. Many persons have the skill and equipment to make a watch; if they follow the procedure they will get an object which fits the general description and performs the operation it's supposed to perform. When we say "it works" in relation to a watch we *know what works*.

But a person who can't read the dial doesn't really know whether it works or not; a person who can't interpret the ticking and the motion of the hands into meaningful symbols

may be convinced by testimony that "it works"—but he doesn't *know*.

Or take one of those wonderful old clocks with moving figures, singing birds, etc. A man who knew nothing of the nature and function of clocks would have no idea just what was necessary to the basic operation of a clock and what was decoration. He might believe that you couldn't tell the time by one of these machines unless a little bird came out and said "coo" so many times, or chimes rang, or a tune was played, or the figures moved around in a particular way.

All such a man might know is that something happens, and you know the time of day.

LET'S ASSUME for the sake of discussion that your neighbor has taken a photo-

### ***Sorry — No Telepaths Here!***

We can't read your minds, so we just have to figure out what you like on the basis of the letters and voting coupons we receive. Did YOU like the cover? How do YOU rate the stories? The makeup of future issues has a lot to do with YOUR votes. So don't telepath; send your vote in to THE EDITOR!

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graph of his plants and "treated" it—thereafter, Japanese beetles never came near the plants. "Damndest thing I ever heard of," he says, looking a little bewildered—"but I did what they said and it works."

Let's assume that you try it yourself—and behold, the Japanese beetles, which gave you such grief before, just don't show up on those plants. Let's assume further that you carefully neglect to "treat" one particular bush or whatever, which has been infested in earlier years—and that one is still bothered this year. But the beetles just somehow don't travel the short distance to a nearby bush they loved last year—one which you operated on via the "photograph" method.

[Turn To Page 122]



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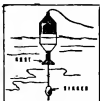
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od this year.

Maybe then you, too, will be dazedly saying or muttering to yourself "it works".

But, even if this happened, both you and your neighbor *have not proved that "it works"*; all you've done is to observe that something happened — that there seems to be *some* connection between *something* you did and the events that followed — events that did not take the course you had every reason to expect they would take. (After all, it *shouldn't* work, should it?)

QUITE A few people are experimenting with "psionic machines" these days; in some instances "something happens"; in other cases, nothing

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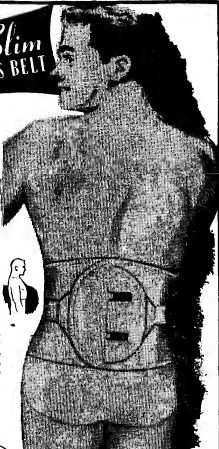
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happens; in still others, something happens, but nothing like what they expected.

And in a number of instances what they thought "happened" either did not happen at all, did not happen in the way they believed it happened, or would have happened in just that way in any case. Because we *do* know that testimony is unreliable; we *do* know that it's very easy to fool people—particularly ourselves.

And we really do know that events happen which seem to contradict "scientific" possibility or explanation; some of us are so upset by this that we go to extreme lengths to keep ourselves from acknowledging such events.

But the fact that

[Turn To Page 126]



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"something happened"—when established — neither proves nor *necessarily* indicates, by itself, that any particular explanation of the event is correct, or entirely correct. The scientific method, like a good watch, is a splendid device within its limitations. Sadly for many people, one of the Twentieth Century superstitions is that the scientific method has no limitations and is *Truth*. Such people when confronted with a happening which cannot be explained within these limitations—of the method itself, and of particular persons trying to use the method—feel that they must defend the scientific method at all costs; they must prove that the event did not happen — otherwise

[Turn To Page 128]

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the scientific method will collapse utterly and leave us all in Dreadful Chaos.

**M**ANY MORE people behave after the manner of such a belief without realizing what their behavior means, of course, than would admit the belief consciously. Still... *all* who reject psi in the name of "science" have no more made an idol of the scientific method than has everyone who reported an unknown "something happening" been the victim of some sort of delusion.

True, these sometimes often do seem to happen to deluded people; crackpots and charlatans exploit such reports; and a certain atmosphere of vague and aimless mysticism is fostered. But is this

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The skilled hand of the German gunsmith is responsible for this .22 calibre, 6-shot repeater automatic with self-ejecting clip. Just 4" long, fits easily into pocket or purse. Ideal for sporting events, stage use. (not available to Calif. residents). Comes for \$6.95 ppd. from Best Values, Dept. G-100, 402 Market, Newark, New Jersey.

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MOST ANY  
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Your Own Private Masseuse at Home

**TAKE OFF UGLY FAT!**

**Don't Stay FAT — You Can LOSE  
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Take pounds off—keep slim and trim with Spot Reducer! Remarkable new invention which uses one of the most effective reducing methods employed by masseurs and Turkish bath—**MASSAGE**! With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of ITALIAN, SWEDISH, and other massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down **FATTY TISSUES**, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased peripheral blood circulation carries away extra fat—helps you regain and keep a **slender and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!**

When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of lightweight aluminum, and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own.  
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**TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS  
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Mail this coupon with only \$1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman \$8.95 plus delivery—or send \$9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT.

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**BODY MASSAGER CO., Dept. B-820**

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Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 day trial period. I enclose \$1 upon arrival I will pay postman only \$8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

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Send DeLux Model

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**LOSE WEIGHT OR MONEY BACK**

**ALSO USE IT FOR ACES AND PAINS  
CAN'T SLEEP: MUSCULAR ACES:**



Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.



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Like a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercises or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or irritatives. Thousands have lost weight this way—in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, etc. The same method used by many stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The "Spot Reducer" can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own home. It is Underwriters Laboratory Approved! Two weeks after using the "Spot Reducer," look in the mirror and see a more glamorous, better, firmer, slimmer figure that will delight you. You have nothing to lose but weight for the "Spot Reducer" is sold on a

**MONEY BACK GUARANTEE**

any more the case than the delusions fostered by Twentieth Century superstitions about science and the scientific method itself? Proportionately? I have no answer for that question.

About "psi" and "psionic machines" etc., I remain neutral. Neutral on which side, you'll ask? Well...I don't *mind* if there's such a thing, or if some of these reports can be verified beyond doubt. I have no suspicions of harboring any "wild talents" (a phrase that strikes me as more agreeable than "psi") myself and don't expect to make any experi-

ments; nor do I intend to devote any unusual amount of time studying the subject. (I'll read articles and editorials about it in my worthy competition, but probably no more than that.)

But let me close with just one appeal to any of you who may be experimenting: for the sake of—well, let's call it sanity in default of a better term—should your efforts bring forth astonishing results, don't say "it works". The mere fact that something happened doesn't verify what "it" is or define what constitutes "working" in this case.

RAWL

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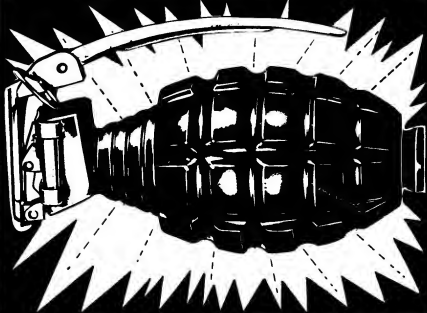
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IDEAL FOR  
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OR SCHOOL  
ORGANIZATION

**More fun than a barrel of  
monkeys when I print in your nick-  
name or tag line .. or I'll print plain**

Kick up your heels — get on the ball — let your friends see that you've got a real personality all your own. You can do it with an order of my new and different Personalized Stationery! It'll get you more favorable comments — more good natured laughs — it'll win you more friends and greater popularity than if you came into Aunt Minnie's fortunel

All you have to do is let me print up your stationery with your nickname and "tag" line. That'll do it! Just you wait and see! Sounds like a simple little thing, but brother how it works! And what perfectly beautiful stationery — the kind you'll be proud of: genuine Vellum envelopes and famous Merion writing sheets. Amazing value — all for \$1.00 postpaid. Now — if you don't want a nickname printed, or you don't want a "tag" line — leave them off and just give me your name and address and I'll print your stationery plain. ACT AT ONCE. Use coupon below.

## WHAT'S YOUR NICKNAME?

If you don't have one . . .  
dream one up

### FELLOWS

Slats  
Chunky  
Smokey  
Lightnin'  
Pitcher Ears  
Spook  
Satch  
Goldbrick Harry  
Glamour Boy

### GALS

Dream Girl  
Honey Bunny  
Kitten  
Bubbles  
Dumpling  
Hep Cat  
Slick Chick  
Baby Face  
Glamour Puss

## WHAT'S YOUR TAG LINE?

A twist on one of your traits  
Last of the big time spenders  
• Life begins at 40 • The  
Personality Kid • Fastest man  
in town • Mankind's gift to  
women • Toast of all the  
bums • Put it off till tomor-  
row • Tightest man in town.

Or I'll print your stationery  
with plain name and address  
If you want to keep your  
stationery formal — you can  
eliminate nickname and tag  
line, and I'll print just your  
name and address.

**SEND ORDER NOW!**

## RUSH THIS ORDER COUPON!

**WILSON — the Stationery Man**  
Dept. 50-F, Tyrone, Penna.

Enclosed please find \$1.00 for which please send my  
PERSONALIZED STATIONERY printed as shown below.

NAME .....  
(Please print and include nickname if you wish)

TAG LINE .....  
(This is optional — limit 6 words)

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... ZONE ..... STATE .....

**WILSON — The Stationery Man**  
DEPT. 50-F, TYRONE, PENNA.

Another scan  
by  
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